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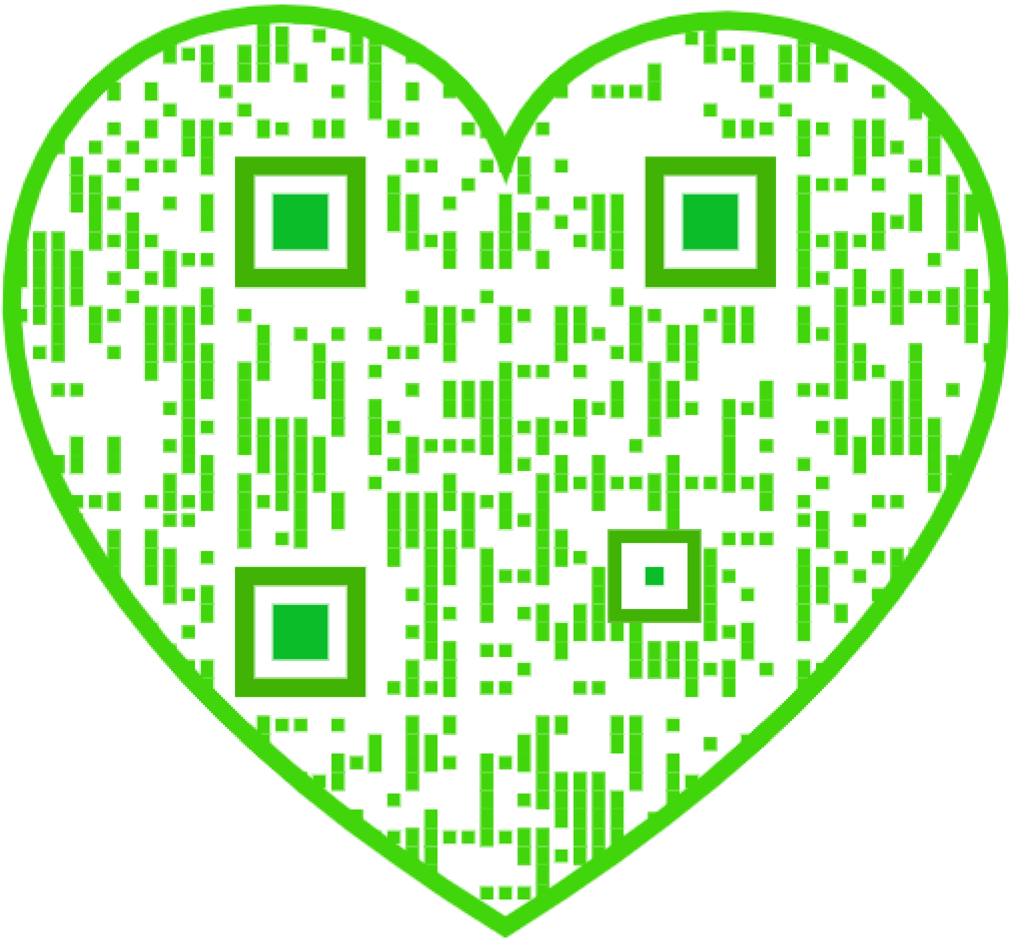

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COMMENT

VW'S SECRET WEAPON IN THE ELECTRIC CAR WAR

Back in the late 2010s, there was much talk from top executives at car firms about partnering start-ups to tap into their tech know-how as they tried hastily to adapt to a software-led world.

Then, perhaps because the world imploded, that trend seemed to fade away and car makers largely launched their own in-house technology and software divisions, no doubt poaching expertise from those start-ups in the process.

Yet here we are in 2025 looking at a promising partnership between Volkswagen and start-up Rivian, secured last year.

As associate editor James Attwood discovers in his conversation with Rivian software chief Wassym Bensaid (p42), the joint venture is a crucial part of Volkswagen's plans for the future.

Notably, the production version of the new ID Every1 concept (p4) will be the first Volkswagen model to use Rivian-derived software when it is launched in 2027, with the marque citing that as key to achieving its £17,000 target price.

Volkswagen has its own software arm, Cariad, which has had some well-documented trouble. Investment in that continues, but in sourcing the expertise of a firm like Rivian, Volkswagen appears to have made a savvy, brave move that could give it a critical edge over rivals.

Rachel Burgess, magazine editor
rachel.burgess@haymarket.com

Meanwhile, online...

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Sensational drop-top Ferrari 12Cilindri driven
Catch it on YouTube and hear its 819bhp naturally aspirated 6.5-litre V12 scream away at 9500rpm.

Classy stars and their cars
We've dug deep into the archive to uncover must-see images from the past of stars and the cars they drove back in the day.

Buttonwatch: Alpine A290
Sure, Alpine's new electric hot hatch is fun to drive, but is it easy to use? Join Jonathan Bryce on our Instagram page to find out.

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4 NEW URBAN EV 'FROM EUROPE FOR EUROPE'

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VOLKSWAGEN TEES UP £17K ID 1 FOR 2027 DEBUT

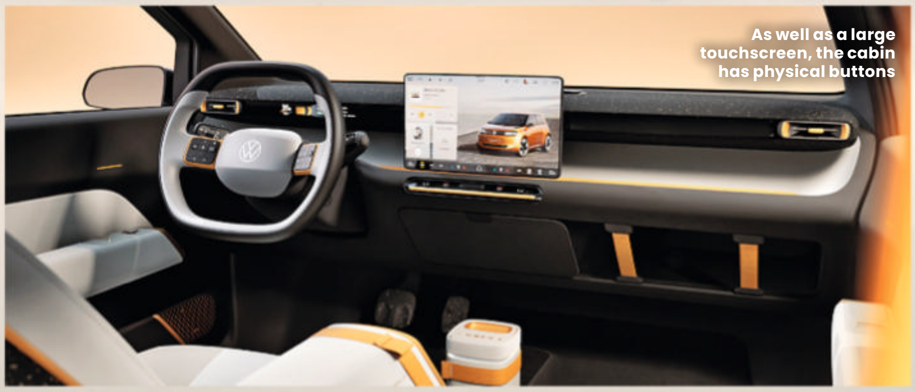
Electric city car will arrive with 94bhp and a range of at least 155 miles – and introduce cutting-edge software

OFFICIAL PICTURES

Volkswagen has vowed to realise its long-held goal of an 'affordable' £17,000 electric car in 2027 with the arrival of the production version of the new ID Every1 concept car.

Described as a model "from Europe for Europe", the new baby hatchback will serve as the spiritual successor to the Up as an A-segment city car. It will also be the entry point to the German firm's range of bespoke electric ID models. Volkswagen boss Thomas Schäfer said the ID Every1 is "the car the world has been waiting for".

The production version of the ID Every1 will use a variant of the front-wheel-drive MEB Entry platform, which has been developed for the forthcoming ID 2, ID 2X, Cupra Raval and Skoda Epiq. The ID 2 will start from €25,000 (£21,000) when it



As well as a large touchscreen, the cabin has physical buttons

> **“Described as a model ‘from Europe for Europe’, it will be the spiritual successor to the Up”**

hits dealerships next year, some £4000 cheaper than the larger ID 2X.

The ID Every1 shares largely the same front end as the ID 2all concept car up to the A-pillar but it has a shorter wheelbase and a new, smaller LFP battery. It also has a different rear axle, based on the Polo's.

A newly developed electric motor produces 94bhp and enables a claimed top speed of 81mph. Volkswagen has given no details of battery capacity but says the range will be “at least” 155 miles. The ID 2all offers 223bhp and around 280 miles.

The decision to use the same front-wheel drive system as the ID 2all was partly to cut development costs and time: in total the ID Every1 will take around three years to develop, a notable reduction on a traditional lead time. ▸

VW's design boss likens the front end to “a slightly cheeky smile”

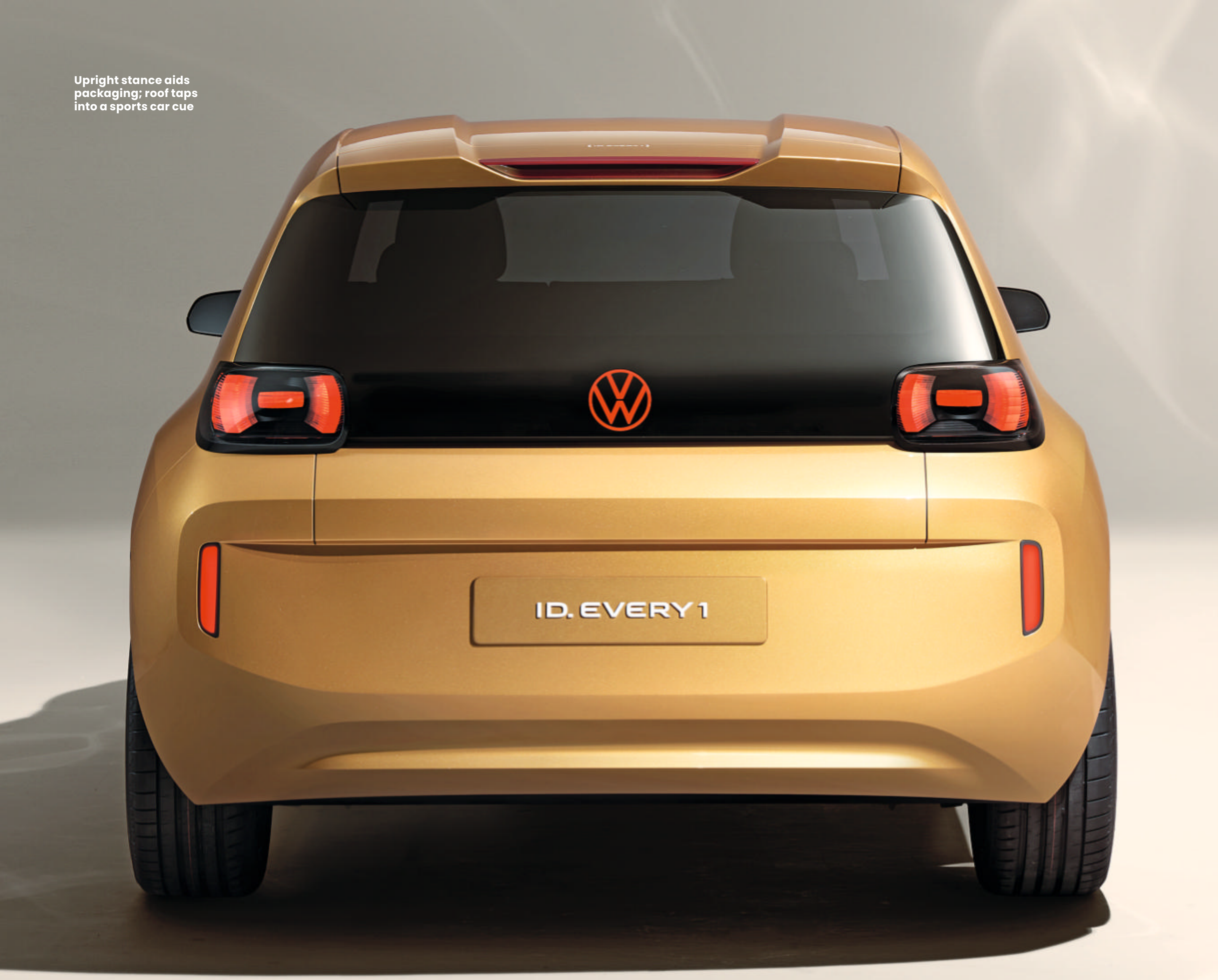
Q&A

ANDREAS MINDT, VOLKSWAGEN DESIGN CHIEF

You wanted to make this car look friendly. Is it hard to do that without it becoming cheesy?
“If you're not careful, you can end up with a comical car with a grin like The Joker. There are so many traps you can fall into. A smile has to be a smile, not a grin. So we worked on aspiring lines that were positive. In the times we have right now, you need something friendly like this to give people a bit of hope.”

What was the thinking behind the roof indent?
“Lowering a section of the roof helps the aerodynamics. For cars with a smooth roof surface, we have to add reinforcements to make it stiffer, because in sunlight it can develop a dent. So lowering the middle of the roof makes it stronger and helps reduce cost.”

What led you to put buttons under the touchscreen?
“Starting with the ID 2, we will have physical buttons for the more important functions – volume, heating, the fans, the hazard light – below the screen. They will be in every car that we make from now on. We understood this. We will never, ever make this mistake any more. On the steering wheel, we will have physical buttons. No guessing any more. There's feedback: it's real and people love this. Honestly, it's a car. It's not a phone: it's a car.”


Upright stance aids packaging; roof taps into a sports car cue

EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR DESIGN

The ID Every1 concept closely previews the production car. It has chunky, upright proportions, with large LED headlights and a rounded front end that, said VW design chief Andreas Mindt, is intended to give the car "a slightly cheeky smile".

The concept features large wheel arches and 19in wheels, with axles pushed to the car's extremities to maximise interior space. Mindt has said he wants every Volkswagen model he designs to offer a "secret sauce" that helps imbue the car with character. As an example of that on the ID Every1, Mindt cites the lowered middle section of the roof, a design trait he said is borrowed from sports cars.

Sculpted arches house new-look 19in wheels

VW's current advertising tagline features on the car

The ID Every1 is 3880mm long, which places it between the Up (3600mm) and Polo (4074mm). The ID 2all measures 4050mm. Volkswagen describes the new city car as a four-seater and says it offers a 305-litre boot – a substantial increase on the 251-litre hold that was offered in the Up.

The interior of the ID Every1 is dominated by a large, horizontal dashboard. Although there is a centrally mounted touchscreen, it is notable that there are also physical buttons for the temperature, heating and volume controls below it.

The steering wheel is a squared-off item. The front passenger, meanwhile, has access to a multi-purpose panel to which different items, such as a tablet or shelf, can be attached.

WILL IT ONLY EVER BE A SECOND CAR?

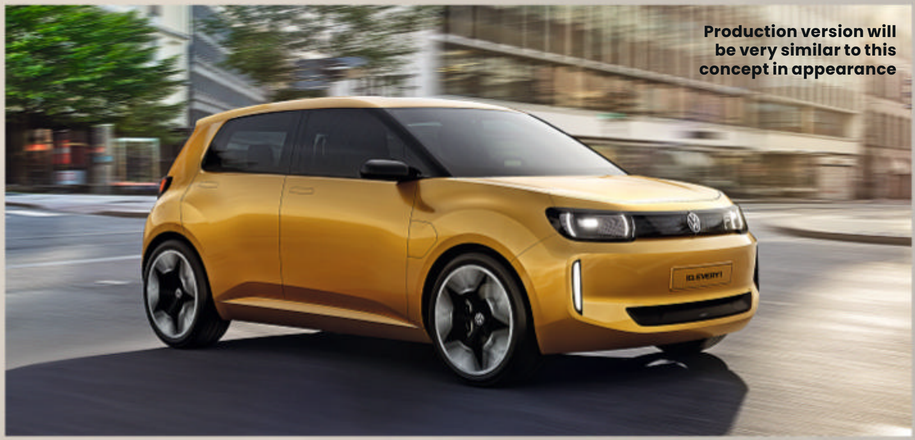
JAMES ATTWOOD

With "at least" 155 miles per charge, it's possible the Volkswagen ID 1 will arrive in 2027 offering essentially the same range as its spiritual predecessor, the e-Up. Sure, the ID 1 promises to be larger, more powerful and £3000 cheaper, but it doesn't feel like progress.

It just shows the challenge of making affordable EVs. Batteries remain the most expensive component, so with VW determined to hit its €20,000 (£17,000) target, that means a smaller battery.

Realistically, 155 miles is fine for a city car, but it will require compromise. And history suggests buyers are unlikely to compromise with their main car. So it concerns me that the ID 1 could find most favour as an affordable second car. Which, instead of widening access to electric mobility, benefits more affluent buyers who can afford two cars.

That's not Volkswagen's fault. Many rivals have given up on small cars, so credit VW for persisting in a category that isn't a huge profit driver. It can't control who buys its vehicles. But it shows the unfortunate inequality of the EV transition: even the drive to affordable EVs risks benefiting those who are better off.



Production version will be very similar to this concept in appearance

"There are currently no plans to make Cupra and Skoda versions of the ID 1"

The centre console, similar to the one in the ID Buzz, is mounted on a rail so it can be slid from the front to the rear compartment.

GAME-CHANGING SOFTWARE FOCUS

The ID 1 will be the first model in the Volkswagen Group to employ a "fundamentally new" zonal software architecture from the company's new joint venture with American EV start-up Rivian.

The new system is based on the software used by current Rivian models (see p42) and is intended to be highly flexible. This means it can be stripped back for the ID 1, but extra elements can be added for the more complex software needs of premium models.

"The main benefit is that it's highly flexible and updatable," said Volkswagen technical chief Kai Grünitz. "Rivian models on the road today can be updated with new functions for customers without the need to touch them. It's really the next step."

While it is unusual to launch an advanced new software architecture on an entry-level vehicle, VW said the decision illustrated how important the entry-level ID 1 market is to the firm.

Grünitz also said the model will serve as a "front-runner" for the next-generation electric Golf, which will arrive before the end of the decade and also use the Rivian-based software.

"This reduces the risk for the Golf because we start with lower functionality in the ID Everyl than will be necessary for the ID Golf," said Grünitz.

PRODUCTION AND FUTURE PLANS

The showroom version of the ID Everyl will be manufactured in Europe, although firm details of precisely where have yet to be disclosed. Grünitz said there are currently no plans for Cupra and Skoda siblings because the market for electric city cars is still developing, but he suggested that could be revisited closer to 2027.

Grünitz didn't rule out a GTI version in the mould of the Up GTI and said the MEB-based platform is able to accommodate that option. He noted potential overlap with the confirmed GTI version of the ID 2all and said a final decision could come down to customer reaction to the ID 1.

The ID Everyl is the first concept to be launched since the firm agreed a new 'Future Volkswagen' plan with unions at the end of last year. That strategy includes binding targets for future projects, including a commitment to strengthening the company's competitiveness by expanding its existing model range and becoming the "technologically leading high-volume manufacturer".

Volkswagen will launch nine new models in Europe by 2027, including production versions of the ID 2all and ID Everyl, and the ID 2X, which is set to be revealed later this year.

JAMES ATTWOOD

Its 305-litre boot can be expanded by folding down the two rear seats

VOLKSWAGEN'S A-LISTERS

Volkswagen Polo (1975-present)
The Volkswagen Golf's arrival in 1974 left space in the range for a smaller car, which VW filled with a rebadged version of the Audi 50. The VW proved to be the better seller and Audi soon axed the 50. While early Polos were shorter than four metres, it gradually grew and is now firmly a B-segment model.

Volkswagen Lupo (1998-2005)
Named after the Latin word for wolf (as in Wolfsburg, geddit?), the 3530mm-long Lupo used a modified Polo platform and even sported a 123bhp GTI version. That failed to boost sales and the Lupo was discontinued after a single generation.

Volkswagen Fox (2005-2011)
The Lupo was replaced by this cost-conscious Brazilian-built hatchback. European versions were all three-doors (we never got the Fox Xtreme mini-SUV, sadly) and featured upgraded safety kit to help with Euro NCAP testing.

Volkswagen Up (2011-2023)
Arguably VW's biggest city car hit, the tiny Up spawned almost identical Skoda and Seat versions. It was offered with a 1.0-litre engine in a variety of tunes, including a sprightly GTI version and, from 2013, in electric e-Up form. Increasingly onerous emissions and safety regulations led to its demise.

TOYOTA C-HR+ EV TO OFFER 338BHP AND 373-MILE RANGE

New BMW iX2 rival will arrive this year and is claimed to be "fun to drive"

OFFICIAL PICTURES

Toyota has revealed the C-HR+, the brand's third EV and, in top-rung 338bhp form, one of the most powerful cars it has launched in Europe.

Described by Toyota as the "core" model in its EV line-up, it gives the firm a foothold in the popular electric C-SUV segment.

The car was originally tipped to carry the bZ3X nameplate and is based on the bZ Compact SUV concept, unveiled in 2022.

It remains largely true to that concept, with a long raked roofline and extended bonnet. Like its hybrid-powered C-HR range-mate, it is bookended by a full-width rear light bar and Toyota's new 'hammerhead' front-end design.

At 4520mm long, the C-HR+ will be positioned between the recently revealed Urban Cruiser crossover and the larger bZ4X in Toyota's EV range. Its size pits it against the likes of the Volvo EC40, Smart #3, Mini Countryman and BMW iX2. Toyota's new EV is likely to undercut these rivals, though, with pricing predicted to start from around £38,000.

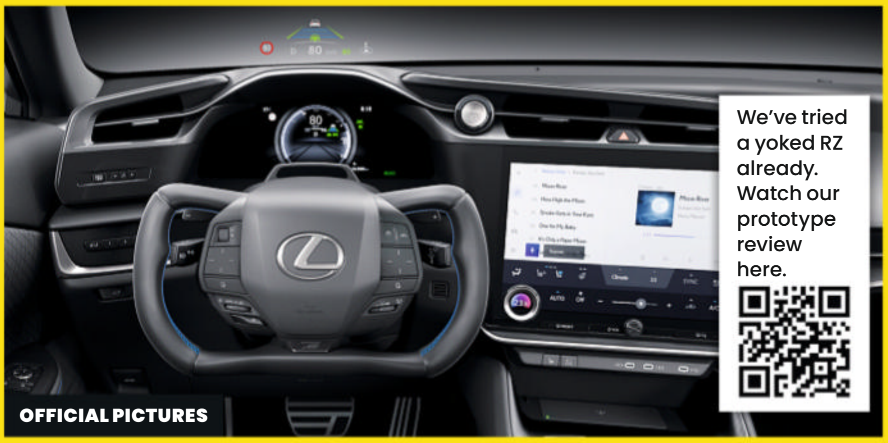
A 2750mm wheelbase

LEXUS RZ GETS ADVANCED TECH AND POWER BOOST

THE LEXUS RZ flagship EV will be one of the first cars in the UK to be offered with steer-by-wire technology – and a hot new range-topper will use a simulated manual gearbox.

Steer-by-wire means there is no mechanical link between the wheels and steering wheel and the RZ's set-up uses a squared yoke in place of a round steering wheel.

For the RZ, the yoke is configured with a lock-to-lock rotation of around 200deg, enabling a full turning circle to be achieved with one movement. A typical set-up with a round wheel requires 720deg of turn, or two full spins.



OFFICIAL PICTURES

We've tried a yoked RZ already. Watch our prototype review here.

Lexus said this "groundbreaking" addition automatically adjusts to give a lighter weight in town, a heavier feel on motorways and an "enjoyable" set-up on winding roads.

It will be the first car in Europe to be sold with by-wire steering, given that laws governing such tech were passed only recently.

Developed by Lexus parent Toyota, the One Grip system is promised to be offered on other models, such as the RZ's bZ4X twin.

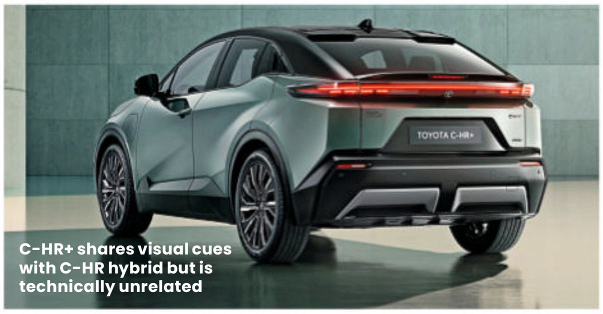
The tech arrives as part of a mid-life refresh for the RZ, which first hit the road in 2023. Alongside the new steering system, the line-up replaces the current 450e range-topper with a more powerful, 376bhp 500e and adds a new performance-focused 550e, which is the RZ's first F Sport model and its new flagship.

The 550e gets a series of visual changes, stiffened suspension and 420bhp, and is the only RZ to have the new steer-by-wire yoke system as standard. It's an option on lesser variants.

Another key addition over lesser RZs is a simulated manual gearbox. Similar to the system used in the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N, it's operated by two finger-

Facelifted RZ offers steer-by-wire and new 420bhp flagship

Space is "a class above" rivals, claims Toyota; layout mirrors bZ4X's


C-HR+ shares visual cues with C-HR hybrid but is technically unrelated

results in cabin space that is a "class above" its rivals, according to Toyota. Although no exact measurements have been given, the firm claims the C-HR+ offers more than is "typically expected of a C-SUV". However, at 416 litres, boot space is at the lower end of the class. Interior options include two wireless smartphone chargers, air-con controls for rear occupants and a panoramic roof.

The C-HR+ is 168mm longer than the hybrid C-HR and is positioned as its electric alternative despite being technically unrelated.

Toyota said that the '+' suffix signifies "added versatility and practicality" over its namesake as well as the "specific qualities and benefits of the BEV powertrain".

Toyota Europe CEO Yoshihiro Nakata said: "We wanted to bring all the passion, emotion and success of the C-HR to the BEV segment, so in this space it shares the same DNA."

Based on the e-TNGA platform also used by the bZ4X, the C-HR+ is offered with either a 57.7kWh or 77.0kWh battery. Its WLTP range of up to 373 miles makes it one of the longest-range cars in the segment. An 11kW on-board charger is standard and high-spec models get a 22kW unit. DC fast charging peaks at 150kW.

The C-HR+ can be had with front-wheel drive or, exclusively with the 77kWh pack, all-wheel drive. Power levels begin at 165bhp, rise to 221bhp and top out at 338bhp in dual-motor, all-wheel-drive form. This beats the standard 3.0-litre six-pot GR Supra by 3bhp.

For power output, the EV is beaten only by the 429bhp GR Supra Final Edition as the most potent Toyota to date, although that sports coupé is sold in very limited numbers and not in the UK.

Toyota claims the C-HR+ is "fun to drive", thanks to the rigidity of the platform, bespoke-tuned suspension, stiffened anti-roll bars and responsive steering. This, said Toyota, is what sets it apart from the bZ4X.

Full UK range details will be revealed closer to the car's arrival later this year.

WILL RIMELL

TOYOTA SPREADS POWERTRAIN BET

Toyota has reaffirmed its commitment to releasing a further three new EVs by the end of 2026 – and Lexus will launch another two in the next 12 months.

A trio of silhouettes suggest that the new Toyota EVs will be an SUV, a pick-up and a fastback. The SUV could be a production version of 2023's Land Cruiser Se concept, Toyota has hinted.

Meanwhile, Lexus is likely to release its own variants of the C-HR+ and Urban Cruiser but details remain scarce.

Toyota has also committed to introducing the next-generation EV tech that it previewed in 2023, such as advanced and low-cost lithium ion batteries and high-performance solid-state packs, before 2030 – while also developing new ICEs and continuing its push with hydrogen and alternative fuels.

Land Cruiser is set to gain EV sibling

sized paddles behind the steering yoke and simulates an eight-speed manual gearbox. This includes limiting power when the 'rev limiter' is hit.

While it's in use, simulated engine noise is pumped into the cabin to give the driver "a deeper interaction with the car" and "a more exhilarating drive".

Elsewhere, the RZ range has been made more efficient, said Lexus. This is primarily owing to a re-engineered electric system that includes a new motor and new 77kWh battery. The revised RZ has a top-end range of around 360 miles in its most efficient set-up.

The new range is due in the UK from the start of 2026. Full details are expected closer to its arrival. The line-up is currently topped by the 450e Takumi at £65,595.

REVISED BZ4X IN LINE FOR CHEAPER PRICE

The RZ-related Toyota bZ4X is now available with a smaller battery and improved efficiency after a mid-life update.

The new 57.7kWh battery joins the 73.1kWh pack in the line-up and is paired exclusively with a front-mounted motor.

As with the RZ, the motors have been made more efficient to increase top-end range from 318 to 356 miles. Power has also risen to 338bhp in dual-motor guise.

The bZ4X gets a mild styling refresh, including a 'hammerhead' front end. But bigger updates inside include a new instrument panel and a 14in touchscreen as standard.

The revised range will arrive this summer. The entry price is expected to fall below today's £42,860 because of the new, smaller battery.

TINY EV PRIZES INCLUSIVITY

The FT-Me Concept showcases the future of mobility, according to Toyota. Labelled a microcar rather than a quadricycle, the 2.5m-long EV signals Toyota's intent to move into urban mobility, with a focus on teenagers.

Inside, the FT-Me has space for two and is controlled by a square, almost yoke-like wheel. In a nod to its "mobility for everyone" brief, all of its driving functions can be operated via the steering wheel, enabling people with certain disabilities to drive it.

It's tipped to spawn several production cars "soon" and be priced to compete with the £7695 Citroën Ami.

MORGAN SUPERSPORT IS A £100K PLUS SIX SUCCESSOR

New flagship aims to mix classic appeal with 21st-century usability

Morgan has revealed the Supersport as a successor to the Plus Six, claiming the upgraded model will be more dynamic and more practical to live with day to day.

The Malvern brand's striking new £100k flagship is so extensively modified over the Plus Six that it has been homologated as a completely new car, rather than a facelift - and its new name reflects the brand's ambition to more clearly separate the new six-cylinder model from its four-pot stablemate.

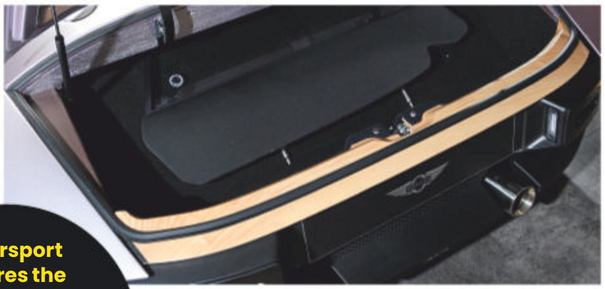
Morgan's head of design, Jonathan Wells, told Autocar: "The aspiration for this car was to create some breadth in the portfolio – to create some division between the Plus Four and Plus Six, which are quite closely related at the moment, with fundamentally the same silhouette and the same interior."

The Supersport adopts a bold new look that melds familiar Morgan hallmarks with more modern and aero-optimised cues. The same treatment was previously deployed on the Midsummer speedster that Morgan designed in partnership with Pininfarina as a Plus Six swansong, though the Supersport was actually finished before that project started.

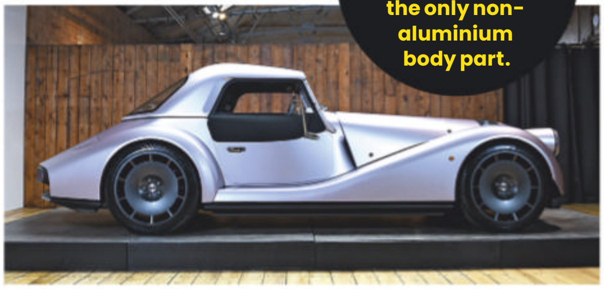
As well as helping to more clearly separate the Morgan line-up into three distinct strands – Super 3, Plus Four and Supersport – Morgan's aim with this new car is to provide a more direct alternative to its mainstream rivals.

"We wanted to see performance Morgans back in group tests with other cars, being really pitched against other premium vehicles," said Wells. He wants the new roadster to be put up against a "base-level 911 or a well-specced Aston Martin – the idea being that Morgan does make a reputable performance flagship car".

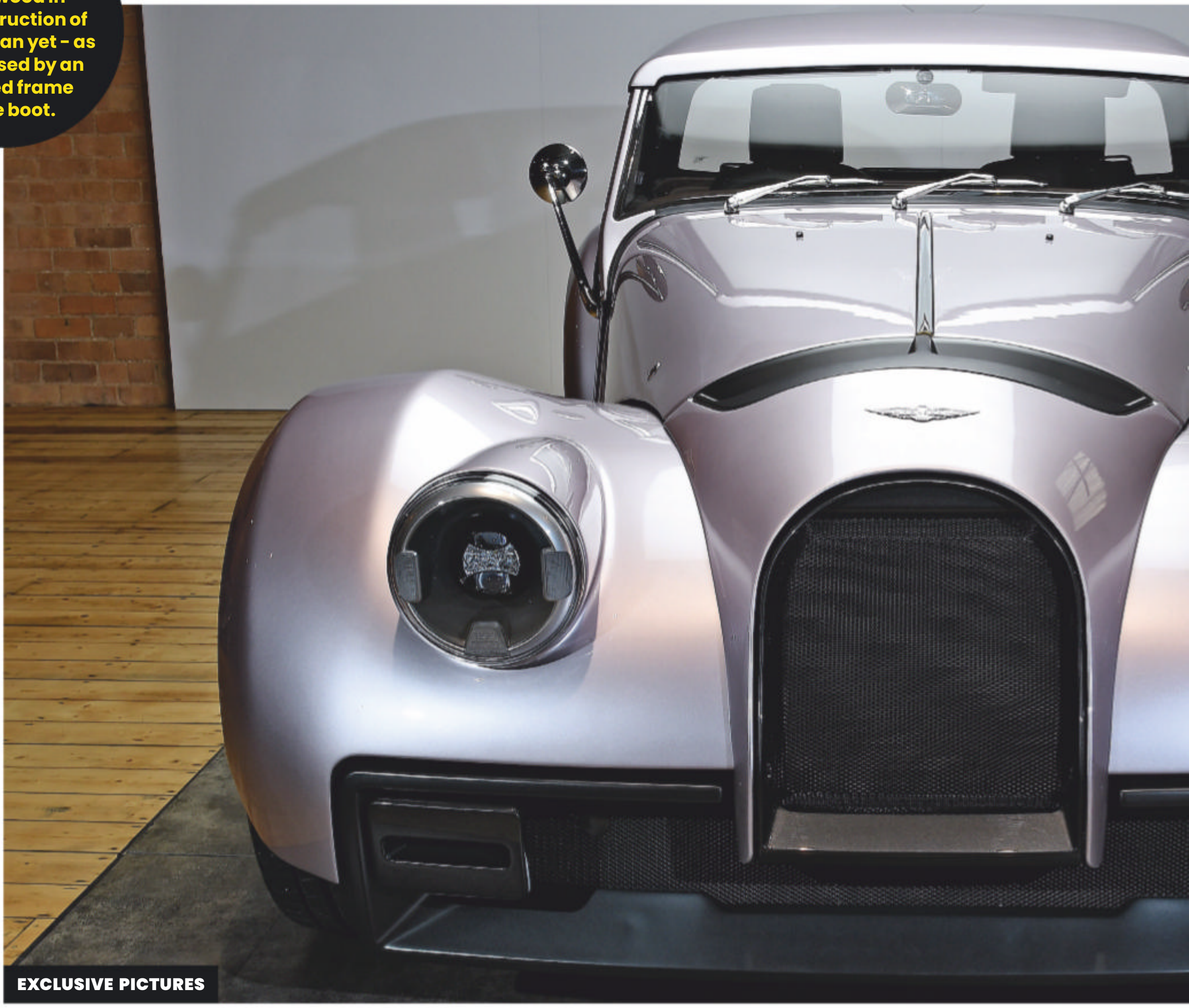
The Supersport – which continues to use BMW's 335bhp B58 six-cylinder turbocharged petrol unit –



Supersport features the most wood in its construction of any Morgan yet - as showcased by an exposed frame in the boot.



Removable carbonfibre roof boosts rigidity by a further 10%. It is the only non-aluminium body part.



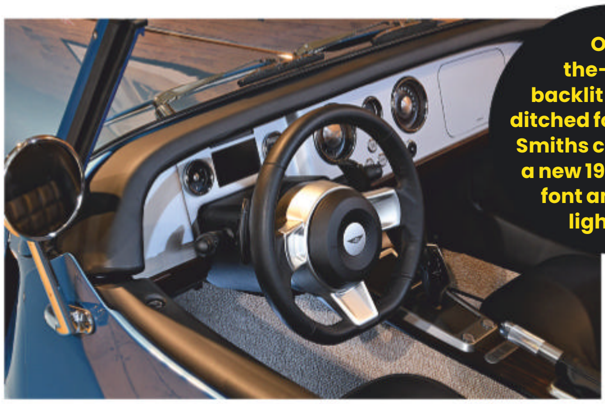
EXCLUSIVE PICTURES

FIRST LOOK AT ALPINE A390

Alpine's A390 crossover EV has been seen testing in Lapland, revealing a similar design to the Beta concept. This includes its prominent front end and Le Mans-inspired fin. It will be unveiled on 27 May.

SHARP RISE IN EV SALES

One in every four new cars sold in the UK last month was electric. EV registrations surged to 21,244, up 41.7% year on year. Analysts attributed the growth to buyers getting ahead of road tax increases.



Off-the-shelf backlit dials are ditched for bespoke Smiths clocks with a new 1920s-spec font and edge lighting.

is built around an evolved version of Morgan's CX aluminium spaceframe, dubbed CXV to reflect how substantially it has been upgraded. The steering system has been overhauled and rerouted for a boost in feel and responsiveness; the standard suspension has been optimised for a more compliant ride, with 30mm more active travel; the rear subframe mounts have been reworked; and extra chassis reinforcements increase torsional rigidity by 10%.

Morgan managing director and chief technical officer Matt Hole said: "We have gone ground-up through the design again, looking at all the attributes we want the car to have, and how we could engineer them back in. Fundamentally, we've changed the structure of the chassis." Hole explained that the goal was to inject the Supersport with added dynamic prowess while also improving its touring credentials.

"We wanted something that flows down the road, so the car does move on its suspension, and we are making the most of that additional travel," he said. "There is a bit of body movement. There is some anti-dive geometry in the rear of the car now that helps the car as it sets off. That's something that we haven't had before. But the idea is to use the travel and control the wheels."

Crucial to the car's more composed and controllable character is a new set of 19in forged alloy wheels that weigh just 9.7kg apiece. That represents a saving of 4kg in unsprung weight per corner over the Plus Six. More conventional 18in cast items are available, but even they are the lightest cast wheels that Morgan has yet produced.

Meanwhile, new Michelin tyres have been chosen for the distinctive dynamic character they support, rather than merely being the grippiest options available.

But just as important as the Supersport's dynamic enhancements are the various ways in which Morgan has sought to address what Wells refers to as some of "the minor quirks of living with a Morgan" and to make it more viable for use in all weathers and over longer distances.

For example, the roadster now has a boot that opens electronically off the key fob and – together with an enlarged load space behind the seats – can accommodate enough luggage for a weekend away. It can also house the removable side screens, which are now detached much more easily and smoothly using the door handles.

There's a glovebox under the dashboard plus a new wireless phone charger in the centre console and a hands-free calling system. In addition, the convertible's tricky Tenax roof fasteners have been swapped for simpler poppers, and the door hinges now have locking points built in so they don't close themselves when parked on a hill.

"A Morgan, typically, is a third or fourth car for many people and we would like this car to become their only sports car," said Wells. "We would like this to be legitimately usable 365 days a year."

Prices for the Supersport start from £102,000, and Morgan expects to build roughly 180 cars this year, before ramping up to an average annual output of around 200 units - slightly more than its predecessor.

FELIX PAGE

Supersport swaps bonnet louvres for a new scoop in its nose, which brings in higher-pressure air for improved aero and cooling.

Q&A JONATHAN WELLS, CHIEF DESIGN OFFICER, MORGAN MOTOR COMPANY

Does the Supersport have as much technology as a Morgan customer wants?
"People have these connected lives where everything is device-driven; music isn't a CD player any more. There's this idea of 'quiet power' with a Morgan, whereby you don't want something that's busy and confusing. This is escapism."

In making your flagship more usable, is there a risk you dilute some of its analogue appeal?
"The Plus Four is still that legacy, traditional Morgan - those Tenax fasteners are going nowhere! The Supersport is definitely about a slightly more contemporary driving focus and the use case is different. It's not about a quick blast around the Cotswolds. You could go for a long weekend away."

Did the Plus Four CX-T off-roader influence the Supersport's more compliant chassis?
"A lot of us consider the CX-T to be what you would expect a Morgan to drive like, having never driven one before: that slightly more linear travel, a little bit of playful body roll, confident in the corners - and just fun to play with."

Luggage rack attaches to new mounting points in the rear bumper, which replicate the overriders that were fitted to Morgans in the 1950s.

VOLVO SWEETENS EX90 DEAL

Early Volvo EX90 buyers will be offered a free hardware upgrade to give the car the more powerful computing system from the new ES90 (see p12). This will unlock safety-enhancing lidar capabilities.

McLAREN F1 TO BE REBORN

British coachbuilder Lanzante will create a three-seat supercar. Codenamed Project 95-59 and claimed to offer up to 700bhp per tonne, it marks the 30th anniversary of the firm's Le Mans win with a McLaren F1.

OFFICIAL PICTURES

VOLVO PRESENTS 434-MILE LUXURY 'SALOON'

Tech-rich new ES90 EV is due in early 2026 from £70k

The all-new ES90 is the first electric Volvo that isn't an SUV - and the slippery, saloon-shaped hatchback offers a range well in excess of 400 miles.

The Swedish brand is positioning the five-metre-long ES90 as its technological flagship, thanks to a series of advanced features and mighty computing power that will allow it to be extensively updated and refreshed with new features over the air.

While the ES90 is ostensibly a saloon in profile, Volvo says design trickery allows it to have the ground clearance and raised driving position of an SUV with a fastback body - and it has a rear hatch, rather than a separate boot.

The styling echoes that of the EX90 electric SUV – including the large, visible lidar sensor in the roof – and it's the most aerodynamic Volvo in history, with a drag coefficient of 0.25.

The second model to be based on Volvo's SPA2 platform for EVs, the ES90 is a similar size to the likes of the BMW i5, Mercedes-Benz EQE and Lucid Air, at 5.0m long, just under 2.0m wide and just over 1.5m high.

A long wheelbase of 3.1m allows for plenty of rear leg room and individually reclining rear seats – something that's important in China, which is a big market focus for the car.

The boot is 425 litres and there's also a 22-litre frunk that's designed to house the charging cables.

While some global left-hand-drive markets will get the ES90 this summer, UK buyers will have to wait about a year for deliveries of right-hand-drive ES90s.

Here it will be priced from around £70,000 in standard Plus trim, rising to just below £90,000 for the Ultra.

Three powertrain options are offered: the 328bhp, 354lb ft, rear-wheel-drive Single Motor; the 443bhp, 494lb ft, four-wheel-drive Twin Motor; and the 671bhp, 642lb ft, four-wheel-drive Twin Motor Performance.

The 0-62mph times of this trio are 6.9sec, 5.6sec and 4.0sec respectively, and the top speed for all is capped at 112mph.

Energy is drawn from an 88kWh battery in the Single Motor model or a 102kWh battery in the Twin Motor models, giving them ranges of 404 and 434 miles respectively.

Thanks to an 800V electrical architecture, the ES90 can be rapid-charged at speeds of up to 350kW, which allows for a 186-mile top-up in just 10 minutes.

The ES90 follows the EX90

Minimalist interior is the "quietest ever" in Volvo's history

Profile is taller than S90's; driving position and ground clearance are SUV-like

VOLVO ABANDONS ESTATES – FOR GOOD THIS TIME

VOLVO IS PREPARING for a future without traditional estate cars – but believes it's already launching models that offer the same qualities.

The evolution of its saloons into hatchbacks, as seen with the new ES90, and the rise in popularity of SUVs such as the XC60 and XC90 mean Volvo believes it can still cater to customers who have traditionally bought the likes of the V60 and V90.

When asked if Volvo could have a future without estates, CEO Jim Rowan said: "Yeah, because I think it has changed, right? SUVs have changed with ride height. Then with our saloons, with the ES90, you will see we've brought the ride height up, rather than down.

"You get so much room in an EV car. You don't have an engine, so you can push the cabin forward and get a lot of boot space."

Volvo estates are back in the UK after a brief hiatus but won't be replaced

The only obvious gap in Volvo's planned eight-model portfolio is for a smaller, ES90-type model called the ES60 – although that could be given a more estate-style shape.

"It's expensive to bring different models to the market, it's expensive to keep those models in the market and it's expensive to launch them from a marketing point of view," said Rowan when asked why Volvo couldn't explore different niches.

Instead, Volvo will try to broaden the scope of its existing models. For example, Rowan said the XC60's role will be expanded to fill that occupied by the V90.

"It's much more cost-effective for us to drive more volume through that same platform and that same form factor," he said. "We're a reasonably small company with limited resources. We're making very conscious choices about where we want to play the game and where we're differentiated."

"It will be a very comfortable and calm car to drive"

in being fitted with Volvo's Superset tech stack but is made even more powerful in its second application and given an additional Nvidia Orin processor, which can perform more than 500 trillion operations per second.

The ES90 features the same dual-chamber air suspension and adaptive dampers as the EX90, leading engineering boss Anders Bell to promise that it will be a "very comfortable and calm" car to drive.

The model is also said to have the "quietest-ever cabin" in Volvo's history.

That interior largely mirrors the EX90's, with a light and airy feel and premium Scandinavian trims and materials.

The dashboard is dominated by a 14.5in touchscreen with Google-derived software, which works alongside a 9in digital instrument cluster and a standard head-up display.

The ES90 is packed with passive and active safety equipment, including a lidar sensor to allow a level of automated driving. As with the EX90, this hardware is fitted as standard even if it isn't fully operational at launch, to be unlocked and enhanced by software updates over time.

MARK TISSHAW

More practical five-door body should give ES90 a broader appeal

Q&A JEREMY OFFER, GLOBAL HEAD OF DESIGN, VOLVO CARS

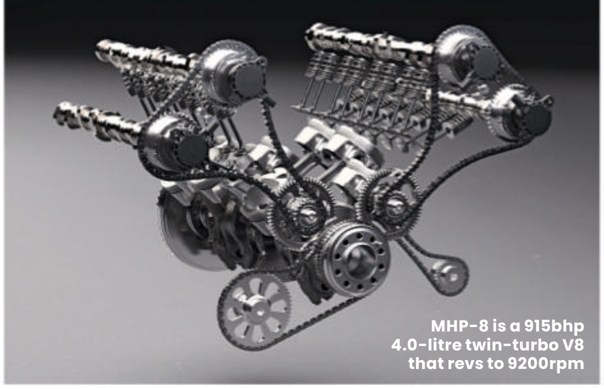
The ES90's lidar sensor is really prominent. Are we wrong to say it's not aesthetically pleasing?
"Design is a series of compromises. There is an adage: if you can't hide it, make a feature of it. But lidar [needs to] see the road; it needs to be high up. These are challenges that we as designers relish. But yeah, the size of it is kind of non-negotiable."

Is this a more premium car than the S90?
"There are some cues from the S90. But this is about creating a new vernacular for premium for Volvo. What is premium when it comes to EV? That's something that's really interesting to play with, rather than sticking with the more skeuomorphic representation of what came before. For me, there isn't any place for that."

Volvo's premium rivals have even larger saloons. How can this go up against those?
"It's about making sure that you really take care of the details; that the fit, finish and materials are best. The way the door sounds [for example]. It's a huge number of sensorial moments that make up this idea as to whether you're in a premium car. Pay attention to the details; don't compromise."

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE



MHP-8 is a 915bhp 4.0-litre twin-turbo V8 that revs to 9200rpm

LATEST SECRETS BEHIND THE McLAREN W1'S POWERTRAIN

McLAREN HAS REVEALED fresh details about how it has extracted so much power from the new MHP-8 engine in the W1 hypercar. The V8 is combined with a hybrid drivetrain consisting of a dual-clutch transmission (DCT) and motorsport-derived electric motor to produce a total of 1258bhp and 988lb ft.

The aim, says McLaren, has been to forge a "strong, emotional response" with the driver and the approach it has taken certainly bears that out. The engine revs to 9200rpm has a 90deg flat-plane crankshaft, which should guarantee plenty of thrills for the driver, with the soundtrack being transferred directly to the cabin. The intention is "to encourage the driver to chase that redline", says McLaren.

An 8% rise in engine speed increases internal inertia forces by around 20%, so for an engine to rev so high and enjoy a long life, engineers must pay close attention to the weight of internal components moving at lightning speed. For instance, intake valve stems are hollow, as are the camshafts. Cam phasers are also lighter and act faster than those in the previous M840T V8.

As well as using lightweight materials, smart design of the architecture avoids over-engineering. For example, water jackets carrying coolant around the cylinder block are designed to achieve the most efficient cooling while retaining maximum strength and reducing weight. The cores used to cast the cavities in the block are 3D-printed, which is more precise than traditional methods.

Though the engine is 15% more powerful, it is 30mm shorter than the M840T and 10kg lighter, giving an advantage in reducing the overall weight of the car and providing a little more scope for positioning the engine in the chassis. Some of the effort has been used to offset weight gain in other areas. For instance, larger turbos contribute to the extra power and longer exhaust manifold runners help create the intoxicating sound engineers were after.

A proportion of the weight saving was also 'spent' on increasing strength to cope with the higher revs and performance. The use of both port fuel injection (PFI) and 350-bar gasoline direct injection adds a little more weight too. PFI is used only at the higher end of the rev and power range, allowing smaller direct-injector nozzles for improved combustion and emissions control.

On its own, the engine produces 915bhp but the radial-flux hybrid motor, which delivers a further 343bhp and 325lb ft, is 90% more powerful and 40% lighter than the McLaren P1's hybrid system. It drives through the side of an eight-speed DCT directly through the geartrain at up to 24,000rpm, sparing the clutches the additional torque.

There's no mechanical reverse gear. Instead, the motor operates in reverse, saving more weight, space and complexity, and it drives in parallel with the engine through all eight gears.

UPROAR AT PLANS TO END CHEAP DEALS FOR CAR INDUSTRY STAFF

Government believes scheme used by car makers and dealers is unfair

The government's plan to end what it has called "contrived car ownership schemes" has rattled the UK's automotive industry, which forecasts devastating consequences for itself and its workers if this becomes law.

The Employee Car Ownership Scheme (ECOS), which the government intends to end from 6 April 2026, differs from traditional salary sacrifice schemes in that the car is owned by the employee, not the employer.

Operated mainly by car makers and their dealers, ECOS enables an employee to buy a brand-new car at a hugely discounted price. Monthly repayment bills are very low, with little or no interest charged.

Under the terms of the arrangement, the employee is required to sell the car back, typically after six months or 6000 miles. It's then replaced by another.

Because the car is owned by the employee and so not deemed a company asset, the employee is not required to pay benefit-in-kind tax or national insurance contributions.

As such, the government believes this arrangement is neither legitimate nor fair, despite ECOS users being subject to heavy limitations (see right).

In her Autumn Budget, chancellor Rachel Reeves outlined measures to "level the playing field" because "this arrangement means those benefiting don't pay company car tax which other employees pay".

Speaking to Autocar, manufacturers said they had been given few details on the proposed changes and were still considering the government's plans.

> **"Repayment bills are very low and they don't pay NI or BIK tax"**

A spokesperson for Stellantis said the group was "speaking directly to the UK government on the impacts and to understand further details and timings".

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said the chancellor's announcement had come as a "complete surprise" after decades of the industry operating ECOS unchallenged.

The SMMT questioned Treasury estimates that taxing ECOS cars as employee benefits would raise £275 million in the 2026-27 tax year and a further £590m over the following three years, because it believes this income would come at the expense of VAT and VED (road tax) on new cars no longer being sold.

Urging the government to reconsider its plans, SMMT CEO Mike Hawes said: "These schemes are an integral part of the remuneration packages that attract people into the industry and allow employees affordable access to the products they make. They are an important part of the new car market and provide a key source of nearly new vehicles to the used market.

Chancellor wants to “level the playing field” on car taxation

“Removing these schemes would challenge manufacturers’ business models, restrict their ability to retain and recruit staff and constrain efforts to decarbonise road transport.

“These [ECOS cars] are new models, reflecting the latest technologies and, as such, are increasingly electric, so to cut off this new and used vehicle supply at exactly the time the industry must drive up EV adoption would be a perverse step.

“Not only would this undermine industry and government net zero ambitions, it would also be counterproductive to economic growth, actually decreasing government revenues from lost VAT and VED, and hurt working people and their families financially.

“We would urge government to think again about this proposal and support the industry and its workforce at this critical time.”

The SMMT claims ECOS generates around 150,000 cars a year for the ‘nearly new’ market that are a valuable mix of popular vehicles and those, such as EVs, that customers would be wary of buying new.

However, used car valuation experts have disputed the magnitude of the impact that ending ECOS would have on used market supply.

A spokesperson for Cap HPI said: “It won’t have an impact on nearly new volumes. The numbers involved are tiny compared to daily rental. The [ECOS] vehicles are often on very strict mileage and there are strict rules on how long they can be kept.”

Meanwhile, Ed Steele, managing director of leading automotive recruitment specialist Steele-Dixon, has predicted that employee recruitment won’t be so badly affected by an ECOS ban.

“Banning the schemes will hamper recruitment, but then if everyone is suffering, I suspect the impact will not be so great,” he said. “At the moment, the prospect is a worry but not yet a problem, and I’m sure the accountants and lawyers will come up with a solution.

“If they don’t, a ban might be a good thing, since 99% of the people I deal with haven’t a clue what it costs to pay for your own car. They should know what it’s like for those people who do.”

JOHN EVANS

A CHEAP NEW CAR EVERY SIX MONTHS. WHAT’S THE CATCH?

The prospect of a new car every six months on terms significantly better than anyone outside the car industry can enjoy sounds great, doesn’t it? Not according to one manufacturer employee in receipt of the benefit.

The employee, who asked not to be identified, has a 1.0-litre hatchback on his firm’s ECOS that costs him just £85 per month. He pays no benefit-in-kind tax or national insurance contributions on it and it’s replaced every six months.

However, he says there are strict limits as to which model he can order and with which options, and even then his order can be overruled by the factory and a different specification from the one he requested supplied. He must pay an excess mileage charge if he does more than 6000 miles in the car and any damage it suffers must be repaired by a manufacturer-approved garage, whose prices, he says, tend to be higher than elsewhere.

If he puts the car through a car wash, any swirl marks must be polished out at a cost of £80, and a chipped windscreen must be replaced, not repaired.

“The scheme is great in the sense that the car is cheap and, unless I damage the car, I don’t have to budget for new tyres or servicing,” said the employee.

“The downsides are that it’s quite inflexible and the higher refurbishment and repair costs put many employees with families off the scheme, because of the damage their kids might do to the car’s interior.”

Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW

Former Peugeot UK MD Druce now oversees nine brands here

BRAND SNOBBERY FOLLOWS Vauxhall around, perhaps best articulated by the suggestion of: ‘Why don’t they just make them Opels?’

It’s true that this badge-swapping relationship is problematic when Opel-Vauxhall is trying to market one brand as German and another as British. I’ve watched a CEO flounder in handling the ‘what about Vauxhall, then?’ follow-up question after waxing lyrical about Opel’s ‘Germanness’.

Yet to suggest Vauxhall should give up 122 years of history is folly. It has its problems, but trying to solve them will be a darn sight simpler than trying to build Opel as a brand in the UK.

Eurig Druce was still in his honeymoon period of leading Stellantis in the UK when Vauxhall’s managing director upped sticks. He has taken temporary charge.

An impressive leader and executive, Druce doesn’t pull punches when saying that Vauxhall must do better, yet in dealing with the ‘Opel question’, he turns it on its head with a suggestion I’ve never heard before: “Why couldn’t Vauxhall be sold elsewhere? There’s no reason for it not to be. There are markets where a British brand would do better than a German one. It’s not the official plan, but why not?”

The short-term goal for all Stellantis UK brands is to beat their 2024 market share (5.83% for Vauxhall). But Vauxhall is a special case, says Druce: “As a home brand, it needs to be the strongest in all areas: profitability, market share. It’s a British brand that manufactures in the UK.”

Druce will also work to “put the belief back into the team” that Vauxhall can be a strong brand – something he believes will be simple, as the brand is being given “the armoury” in a series of new models, such as the Frontera and Grandland.

The belief needs to extend “not just to the Vauxhall team but the [dealers] as well”, but Druce reckons “re-engaging with the network won’t be particularly hard” and it’s a case of “putting volume through them”.

Even though there has been a drop in the number of Vauxhall dealers from a peak of 349 in 2013 to about 190 now, area coverage has been largely unaffected. And given that Vauxhall’s market share was 14% at its peak in 2008, there’s obvious room to grow.

When asked if he believes there is some sneering towards the brand from certain areas, Druce says that is “probably true” as they are “honest cars”.

But so what? Druce plans to build on its strengths in the regions and sweat the deep, long-standing relationships that buyers have had with their dealers.

“There’s no reason why Vauxhall couldn’t be sold abroad”

“I’m a rural boy. You buy in your own town: I understand this concept,” says Druce. “There’s loyalty to the brand but loyalty to the dealer too. Dealers have probably interacted with customers numerous times.

“But the new products can also attract new customers. They’re priced attractively and simply, with the EVs the same as the ICE models. That alone makes them stand out.”

GETTY IMAGES

OFFICIAL PICTURES

GAME-CHANGING EFFICIENCY PROMISED FOR ELECTRIC GLC

Mercedes' best-seller to benefit from a host of new tech as it turns EV

The new Mercedes-Benz GLC EV will arrive later this year as an indirect replacement for the EQC, marking a strategic shift in the firm's EV strategy – one focused on integration rather than reinvention.

This more pragmatic approach will result in the GLC EV slotting in alongside a facelifted version of the existing combustion GLC in 2026, sporting an almost identical look inside and out.

Boss Ola Källenius wants less differentiation and greater cohesion between powertrains in a bid to drive EV sales. Until now, Mercedes has designed distinct EVs with unique names and positioning.

The GLC has regularly been Mercedes' best-seller since its 2015 launch, and the firm hopes the GLC EV can leverage that equity to be a catalyst for EV sales.

The new strategy also streamlines development and production – a crucial consideration as Mercedes seeks to cut costs as it ups its number of EV models.

The next-generation CLA will be the first to adopt this strategy when both EV and ICE variants are launched this month. The GLC will then become the first car already on sale with ICE powertrains to gain an EV sibling.

Such is the importance of the new GLC EV, as a rival to the Audi Q6 E-tron, BMW iX3 and Porsche Macan Electric, that it's set to be the centrepiece of Mercedes' display at September's Munich motor show.

The GLC EV will be the first model based on the firm's EV-specific MB.EA platform, which will also underpin an electric C-Class saloon and a new 'Little G' off-roader, both due in 2026.

It will also be the first EV to use Mercedes' eATS 2.0 drivetrain, previewed by the Vision EQXX engineering concept in 2023.

In its most potent dual-motor, four-wheel-drive form, it will offer 483bhp. A single-motor, rear-wheel-drive model with 268bhp is also under development.

A 94.5kWh nickel-manganese-cobalt battery is claimed to deliver a range of more than 404 miles.

All this operates on a new 800V electrical architecture that allows for charging speeds of up to 320kW – good for a 162-mile charge in just 10 minutes.

Efficiency is further boosted by a new heat pump that is not only significantly more effective than the system used today but also far more compact. This has allowed Mercedes to give the GLC EV a 100-litre frunk in addition to the ICE GLC's 560-litre rear boot.

Additionally, Mercedes has created a new brake energy recuperation system called One Box, which uses computers to calculate the ideal balance of regenerative and friction braking.

Dominik Voogdt, head of overall vehicle engineering for the GLC EV, described it as a "game-changer" for overall efficiency.

The GLC EV will be produced at Mercedes plants in Bremen, Germany, and Beijing, China, with the possibility of additional production in Tuscaloosa, US, depending on tariff considerations.

GREG KABLE

GLC EV will indirectly replace the EQC, which was launched in 2019

WHAT'S THE NEW GLC EV LIKE TO DRIVE?

For Autocar's first drive of the GLC EV, Mercedes has brought me to the Galtispuoda mountain pass in Sweden's Arctic.

The driving position and ergonomics all feel familiar to current GLC models, which is nice, but I can't say much more about the radical new interior yet.

I can confirm it's roomy in here, noticeably in the back, thanks to the EV's longer wheelbase – a benefit of the new MB.EA platform.

Setting off from the pass's summit, there's an undeniable urgency to the new eATS 2.0 drivetrain. And despite the treacherous winter conditions, there's dependable traction and swift acceleration, thanks to the fast-reacting four-wheel drive system. Even in these conditions, the GLC EV builds speed effortlessly. The stability control system also works rapidly without ever feeling intrusive.

But it's in the corners where it really impresses. The steering, light in feel, is precise and offers good feedback, inspiring confidence. It's backed up by an AMG-tuned rear-wheel steering function.

The GLC EV's agility belies its size and weight. It's not just the way it turns in confidently; it's also the composure it maintains mid-corner when the surface shifts from snow to ice and back again.

There's no specially prepared spiked rubber here, just winter tyres.

The air suspension, with its variable ride height, keeps body movement well controlled too.

And what of the new brakes? Apart from the dependable feel of the pedal, what's impressive is just how much of the braking force is handled purely by recuperation. It's seamless, efficient and surprisingly effective.

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

Sign of the times: MSV has replaced BMW M4s with Hyundai Ioniq 5 Ns

MONDAY

I'm profoundly surprised to see that PalmerSport has begun offering 'taster laps' in a Hyundai Ioniq 5 N as a new component of its eight-car, on-limit performance driving days at Bedford Autodrome. After all, what we've surely learned about EVs is that most lack character and few can survive full-noise use on a race circuit for long.

It turns out that the Ioniq 5 N idea came to Jonathan Palmer when he drove one last year at our Britain's Best Driver's Car shootout at Cadwell Park, one of five circuits run by his Motorsport Vision group. MSV was looking to move on from a BMW deal and alighted on Hyundai as a tech-driven car-making giant with a pedigree of impressive driver's cars like the recently departed i20 N. Palmer, open-minded about EVs, was deeply impressed with the Ioniq 5 N and believed his customers would be too.

"It's extremely quick, like lots of EVs," he says, "but what's special is the way it emulates the really good petrol cars we've grown up with. You get eight gears, an 8000rpm redline, a convincing engine sound that stutters beyond the rev limit and power that escalates as the revs rise, just like a good supercar. The point is, it's brilliantly executed. Badly done, it would have been embarrassing. But I defy anyone not to like it."

It's that time of the year when car lovers wake up and head back to C&M

> **"It's brilliantly executed. I defy anyone not to like it"**

TUESDAY

Oh dear. The Anti-Destination League of Road Legislators is at the helm again, this time floating a proposal that Scotland's arterial roads should carry a default 50mph speed limit and the 70mph limit on its motorways and dual carriageways be cut to 60mph. Trucks, meanwhile, will be allowed to go faster than presently.

The claim is that accident rates will fall, but of course there's no proof; it's a guess. It might be better – albeit a tougher target – to use the effort and cash on reducing proven lethal practices like drink- and drug-driving.

If the speed restrictions go through, anyone who wants to make reasonable time on the 300-mile drive from Edinburgh to Wick will either spend hours breaking the law or risk falling asleep and driving off the road from the sheer boredom of it all.

WEDNESDAY

An interesting chat with Dan Macken, one of the founders of the now three-pronged Caffeine & Machine business, who feels as strongly as I do that there's a moment towards the end of winter when all car enthusiasts suddenly feel their automotive fixation more acutely, so start fixing and fettling their cars and planning new exploits.

I dropped in for coffee at the original C&M site (The Hill, just off the Fosse Way at Ettington, Warwickshire), where Macken told me about a never-to-be-forgotten weekend, 23/24 February 2019, when it first became clear the four-month-old business was heading for success. He reckons there have been similar 'season-opening' weekends ever since, although these days it seems to have slipped a week into the first days of March.

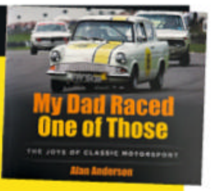
FRIDAY

I spent the day in Yate, Gloucestershire, with Fellten, experts in all aspects of EV development, for a story you can read in the mag soon.

One of the highlights was sitting for a couple of hours with the firm's wise and witty trainer, Chris Skelton. We talked through many EV repair and ownership matters, including the thorny subject of the rare but unstoppable thermal runaway that can affect lithium ion batteries. These events worry prospective EV purchasers, who see lurid fire videos on YouTube without ever connecting them to the batteries in their pockets.

We talked a lot about collapsed electric car values, focusing (as people tend to do) on the trajectory of Porsche Taycan prices. As I write, there are 76 four-year-old examples offered on Auto Trader and every one is under £35,000 – which in Skelton's view and mine makes them great buys.

AND ANOTHER THING



According to Alan Anderson, author of an uplifting little book called My Dad Raced One of Those, Henry Ford claimed motorsport began "five minutes after the second car was built". Anderson shows over 160 pages how competition today extends to everything we drive and how cheap/puny is just as enjoyable as expensive/powerful. Read and be inspired.

GET IN TOUCH

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PRIOR CONVICTION

Matt Prior

Mighty Convoy, a British non-profit organisation that delivers ambulances and medical aid to Ukraine, has joined forces with two other charities to more effectively get aid to the sick and injured.

I travelled with Mighty Convoy a few years ago (Autocar, 19 October 2022) as it delivered three ambulances filled with emergency medical kit to the Christian Medical Association of Ukraine (CMAU) in the western city of Lviv.

With aid needed "now more than ever", that partnership has been expanded to include the International Christian Medical and Dental Association (ICMDA) under a new campaign called Convoy of Hope, launched at the Palace of Westminster last week.

So far, Mighty Convoy has raised £330,000 to take 12 convoys to Ukraine, delivering 49 vehicles (38 ambulances, nine pick-up trucks and two refrigerated lorries), 35 tonnes of aid and 30,000 meal packs. The ICMDA and CMAU have, meanwhile, delivered and distributed medical equipment worth £10 million, including 120,000 pallets from the Nightingale hospitals created for the NHS at the height of the Covid pandemic.

"Nearly all of the Mighty Convoy ambulances are still in action," founder Simon Brake told us last week. "And when Ukrainians tell us directly about the lives they've saved, we know we have to continue."

His convoys operate primarily on a pay-to-drive model. Around £7000 is enough to buy and take one ambulance, which will be filled with donated medical supplies and typically is driven by those who raised the money. Individuals, clubs and community groups are among those who have donated and made the trip (including one from Autocar's publisher, Haymarket).

"We've built a community of like-minded people," said Brake. If you like road trips, this is one of the most important and, glib though this might sound, enjoyable ones you will make.

Prior, Brake and co drove three donated ambulances to Ukraine in 2022

Brake has been supported by Specialist Vehicle Solutions of Dudley in finding and servicing ambulances for the journey – ones at the right price and that will be reliable enough. But there's also a need for vans, minibuses and pick-ups, which, being four-wheel drive and much more rugged, can travel further towards the front lines than road-biased ambulances.

But while Brake has a solid and trusted source for ambulances, "it's harder to find reliable pick-ups", he told us. "At the moment, we're buying them at auction, and it's very much pot luck what we get. I want to appeal to companies operating large fleets of vehicles like pick-ups."

Brake would take donated vehicles, but they need to be reliable enough to make the journey and still have a useful active life when they arrive. By the time many companies are ready to dispose of pick-ups for nothing, they can be beyond that.

> **"The people of Ukraine need aid now more than ever"**

"We want access to buy [vehicles] directly from fleet operators," said Brake. "We know they will be better maintained."

If you are or know one of these operators, you can follow the link below, or email me directly and I will pass on your details to Brake.

Uliana Kovalyshyn, project manager for the CMAU, travelled to London from Lviv last week. "Support like this has become priceless for us," she said, noting that 173 medical facilities have been destroyed and 1218 damaged since Russia invaded Ukraine three years ago.

In a video recorded near the front lines in one of Mighty Convoy's donated ambulances, combat medics allege that the Russian military targets medics and their vehicles. "One medic is worth 10 soldiers: that is their calculation," one said.

Lieutenant Mykhaylo Korchynskyy, a lawyer who joined the Ukrainian military in 2022, going on to lead platoons in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions, and is now an officer at the Main Directorate of Military Justice, was also in London last week. "Almost every soldier in my platoon was injured," he said. "Those who survived did so due to fast access to the right equipment. We depend on our global allies for support.

"I have seen many horrible things that Russians did – things I never expected to see in Europe in the 21st century," he continued. "And as you can see from last Friday [Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy's meeting with Donald Trump, after which much US support was cancelled], it's far from ended."

The next convoy leaves today (12 March). You can find details on how to support it and on future convoys at icmda.net/convoy.

GET IN TOUCH
matthew.prior@haymarket.com

PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY
icmda.net/convoy
CONVOY OF HOPE

Left to right: ICMDA CEO Peter Saunders, Kovalyshyn, Brake, Korchynskyy, Daisy Cooper MP

RACING LINES

Damien Smith

Domination in Qatar will have Ferrari dreaming of a first top-class WEC title

Finally, the wait is over. More than a year since he pledged himself to Ferrari, Lewis Hamilton will make his debut for the Scuderia this Sunday at the Australian Grand Prix (see p52). Might he win first time out? If he does, he will join Juan Manuel Fangio, Luigi Musso, Giancarlo Baghetti, Mario Andretti, Nigel Mansell, Kimi Räikkönen and Fernando Alonso in Maranello's perfect-start club. Stranger things have happened.

What an exciting time to be a Ferrari fan. Beyond Hamilton and Charles Leclerc in F1, the Prancing Horse has got 2025 off to flier in sports car racing, with a resounding one-two-three in the World Endurance Championship season opener in Qatar. In the wake of its back-to-back victories at the Le Mans 24 Hours and the satellite AF Corse operation's win in Texas last year, success at the Qatar 1812km was the factory team's first with the 499P away from 'the big one'.

Antonio Fuoco, Nicklas Nielsen and Miguel Molina led the podium lock-out, with the yellow AF Corse car finishing ahead of the other scarlet works entry. The trio were separated by less than three seconds at the end of the 10-hour race, after a dominant performance. While a Le Mans hat-trick is a clear and obvious ambition, Ferrari really wants a world championship to complete the set and its campaign to achieve that sure has begun on the right hoof.

YELLOW ALERT

The Ferrari order was decided only in the final round of pit stops at Lusail. Fuoco held out for longer, meaning less fuel and a shorter stop, and he emerged with a narrow lead over Robert Kubica in the AF Corse car.

So close and surely frustrating for the Pole – although he must be relishing what's to come. Kubica probably would have become a Ferrari F1 driver if not for the rally accident in 2011 that almost cost him his right arm. How he has overcome such severe injury to even return to F1 is already among motorsport's great comebacks, but to see him flying high in a Ferrari caps it all. He's 40, just over a month older than Hamilton – and without that cruel accident might still have been jousting at the top as one of the greats of his generation. Now teamed with quick Chinese Yifei Ye and Britain's Phil Hanson, who at 25 has landed the drive of his life, Kubica still has so much to race for.

> **"No one is moaning, because they can't. Probably just as well"**

THE CHASING PACK

Among the other seven major manufacturers in the Hypercar class this year, BMW proved best of the rest behind Ferrari in Qatar as ex-Haas F1 racer Kevin Magnussen began his new life on a (mostly) positive note.

The British Jota team, which has risen from running customer Porsches to being Cadillac's new 'factory' squad, could have done without Alex Lynn rear-ending the sister car of Jenson Button, while Toyota overcame a poor qualifying to get both cars into the top six. Porsche was nowhere, while Aston Martin logged useful experience on the debut of its Valkyrie.

Spanish star Palou continues to show the Americans how it's done

As ever, there's a question over just how much Balance of Performance (BoP) shaped the result. This year, Ferrari has been handed a significant weight break under the manipulated algorithm on which this golden era of endurance racing is founded. Teams and drivers are barred from discussing BoP in public (how very 2025), but they have all bought into the concept without which the WEC wouldn't be thriving, so no one is moaning to the media, because they can't. Probably just as well.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

In the US, the Indycar Series is heralding a new era for 2025, despite everything looking largely the same after an interminably long five-month off-season. A new TV deal with Fox Sports is huge for America's premier single-seater series, but the spec Dallara cars are heading into their 13th year – astonishing in comparison to the churn of new cars and regulations in every other major racing code – and the mid-season addition last year of hybrid systems to the 2.2-litre V6 engines supplied by Honda and Chevrolet has made little outward difference to the spectacle.

At the St Petersburg street race season opener, the hierarchy remained unchallenged. Penske's Scott McLaughlin led convincingly from pole position, only to be undone by the wrong tyre strategy, as Chip Ganassi Racing's Álex Palou began his quest for a fourth title in five years with a finely judged win. The racing was largely processional, so Josef Newgarden's pass on Scott Dixon stood out, only for the double Indianapolis 500 winner to lose what he had gained on the last lap because of an electronics glitch.

As usual and across 17 races packed between now and the end of August, Indycar will throw up its usual mix of winners – but expect the champion to come from this top quartet.

PENSKE ENTERTAINMENT / TRAVIS HINKLE

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

Letter of the week

WHAT GOOD VALUE LOOKS LIKE

As car buyers, we're caught in the (im)perfect storm of seemingly being overcharged for electric cars to recoup manufacturers' investment costs or similarly overcharged for combustion cars because they're less attractive to build, due to government legislation and as manufacturers understandably turn their investment to EVs (acknowledging supply chain issues, inflation etc). Add to that the fear of sharp depreciation in EV values, due in part to rapid improvements in battery technology, and similarly in ICE cars as they become marginalised. It's no wonder many are on the fence about buying new cars.

Illya Verpraet's suggestion that at £50,000 the Honda Civic Type R is unaffordable ('Game for a laugh', 26 February) was well made. It is indeed expensive – but is it that pricey comparatively? Flick a couple of pages back and you find that the Cupra Born VZ – an undoubtedly inferior car (unless it has to be an EV, which isn't my point here) – is only £5000 cheaper. Factor in the likely much greater depreciation of the Cupra and the Honda looks a much better buy than it or any of the other cars in your EV hot hatch test.

David Calver, via email

Cap HPI forecasts the Civic Type R to have depreciated from £48,900 to £28,225 (down 42%) after three years and 36,000 miles, the Born VZ from £44,570 to £21,800 (down 51%) after the same – KC

MEGA MEGANE

I thought I'd share my experience with a 2002 Renault Mégane Fidji. I took it over from my dad in 2017, with 87,000 miles on the clock, thinking it was going to be a short-term car. Now at 163,000 miles, it's still going strong, with all electrics working, including the sunroof, and still the same exhaust after 22 years.

Having kept the bills, I thought I'd do a comparison on what it's cost me to maintain the Mégane against contract hire on a new car and was surprised by my findings.

I did this as the clutch started to slip at 159,000 miles and wanted to work out if it was worth paying £450 for a new clutch. I decided that it was, given the savings I had made.

Adding up all the bills now, including for the new clutch, the Mégane has cost me a total of £2970 over 90 months – the equivalent of £33 per month. A contract hire would have cost me £20,250, meaning a saving of £17,280.

The car has just passed its MOT test; I will review next year and, if no major bills present themselves, will carry on running it.

I remember when French cars had poor electrics and Fords rotted out after 10 years.

David Sim
Via email

RS ABOUT FACE

Illya Verpraet mentions a Renault Clio RS 200 from 2005 ('Game for a laugh', 26 February).

Back to school! The RS 200 was available from 2009 to 2012; 2005 would have been the previous generation. Not only that, but 2005 heralded the introduction of the RS 182 Trophy – to this day, one of the most revered and widely appreciated hot hatches of all time.

Here endeth the history lesson, and thanks for a great magazine.

Gary Berendt
Via email

Sorry! You're quite right with 2009 – IV

HIGH 5

Congratulations to Renault and particularly to CEO Luca de Meo for not just achieving a great financial turnaround but actually bringing some great products to market.

I recently had the opportunity to drive the new Renault 5 [road test, p30] and I was amazed at just how sophisticated and well equipped the car is for the price. It shows what can be done with a clean-sheet design, albeit one that has taken clever inspiration from the original 5. It's a really distinctive car. It may be more expensive than a small Chinese EV, but I think Renault is right to make its cars more aspirational.

I cannot but make a comparison with Stellantis and feel that it has got itself into a mess with its profusion of brands and trying to use the same platforms for both ICE and EV models.

Renault has also sensibly kept Dacia as a value brand appealing to a different market segment.

'Tonrichard'
Via autocar.co.uk

Bangernomics still works, reports Mk1 Mégane owner David

There are so many great hot Renaults that one can get confused…

Mini's interior reinvention lost it Mark's custom

NOT SO HIGH 5

Uncut hedgerows and tight local shop parking resulted in our 2020 purchase of a Mini Electric hatch as a small, family-shared local runaround. Only two operational gripes: no memory seats to speed the changeover between family drivers and too small text on the driver's instrument binnacle.

The new Mini Cooper E should have been the natural upgrade, particularly as memory seats had been added, but form wilfully ignored function with the central and only screen, which meant an absolute no. Voice control and a toytown head-up display will never substitute for the safety of maximised in-vision info.

The new Renault 5 looked a tempting alternative, so we paid a reservation fee, expecting to confirm after a test drive. But it was not to be: no memory seats and, unlike the Mini, in order for my 5ft-tall wife to see over the instrument binnacle, the driver's seat had to be pumped up to max height and fitted with a cushion and spring backrest. We knew the frustration this would cause for family driver changeovers would outweigh the 5's many excellent attributes.

A senior Renault UK marketer was in attendance for our test drive, so we were able to directly communicate our concerns. This included minor comments on the cheap, dirty-yellow look of the door trims in the Iconic model; limited, garish, non-metallic paint choices; and disappointment at the lack of vehicle-to-grid functionality for at least a year, unlike in France. He was unconcerned, presumably because fussy folk like us are the minority. We came away with the conclusion that the UK 5 has been specced for Gen Zers taller than 5ft.

I learned something important: the 5 has a helpful range indicator for best and worst cases. At 96% charge, the best was around 240 miles, the worst around 120. So for any future EV required for a non-stop 200-mile motorway trip, I will need a 400-plus-mile WLTP range.

Renault isn't alone in ignoring 5ft humans. We await a civilised, small electric supermini in which ergonomics have been prioritised and the bells and whistles are optioned.

Mark Cavendish
Via email

PACK IT IN

We were recently offered a tempting £750 off from our local Audi dealer for a new car delivered before the end of June, prompting us to look at specifying a new S3 Sportback.

There are very few options to obtain a car with a similar spec to our 2016 S3, which we specced with matrix headlights, thinking we might need help to see at night as anno domini marched on. These now only come with the £3000-plus Technology Pack, which also includes a glass roof that neither of us wants or needs (and will probably increase our insurance premium).

Mark Tisshaw's talk with new Audi UK boss José Miguel Aparicio (Grapevine, 19 February) revealed an attitude of 'take it or leave it' in forcing buyers to accept unwanted specifications – especially those of us who actually buy a car, rather than 'rent' one on a PCP basis.

Bells and whistles are all very well for those who need to boast that they have the top-of-the-range model, but not for us, I'm afraid. So in the words of a TV 'dragon', we are out and not investing in a new S3 unless this marketing policy changes.

Anthony Marfleet
Wangford, Suffolk

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

GREAT REASONS TO BUY

Next week's issue

ON SALE 19 MARCH

FEATURE

CATERHAM, CLEAR FOR TAKE-OFF

Matt Prior heads to the Mach Loop, home of fast, low-flying jets, in a fast, low-flying £80k Seven model that's back in the UK for one last time

INTERVIEW

VOLVO BOSS JIM ROWAN SPEAKS OUT

Former CEO of Dyson on why car makers are facing a Darwinian future

ROAD TEST

SKODA ELROQ

The electric equivalent of the Karoq is laid bare by our road test team

EVERY WEEK

USED GUIDE

FIAT PANDA

The *other* lovable small Fiat can be had for £1500. Top buying tips

OUR CARS

FORD FOCUS

Uh-oh, it's an MOT test failure. Sam Phillips tells us the score

AUTOCAR

The original car magazine, published since 1895 'in the interests of the mechanically propelled road carriage'

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HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time - either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production specification. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

FIRST DRIVES

TESTED 21.2.25, MALAGA, SPAIN **DELIVERIES** SPRING

AUDI SQ5 SPORTBACK

A new generation of the big SUV is led by a sporty version that has returned to petrol V6 power

There's a very small detail on the new-generation Audi SQ5 that I think means a great deal: the red Audi Sport oblong is back.

This oh-so-subtle differentiator could for a very short time be stuck on the back of anything that had four rings at the front. Then Audi got rid of it entirely. Now it's back on a proper S car.

It would be a reach to say this ties up with Audi Sport returning to form, but this SQ5 is certainly good and much more of an S car than Audi's latest EVs. With the electric stuff, S variants have been a touch meh – more of a trim level with a few nice bits than the toned-down RS experience we had all come to enjoy. Sure, the S6 E-tron is quicker than the regular A6 E-tron, but with an EV it's a bit like: so what? Plus it has a significantly shorter range. By contrast, the SQ5 is notably different to the regular Q5 (driven, p25).

This is largely due to the engine. The previous-generation SQ5 was supplied by the black pump, but Audi has seen fit to change it to a 3.0-litre V6 petrol – a 362bhp affair with 406lb ft of torque. It's a great unit, pliable with a wide band of operation and a real turn of pace.

The torque levels mean that if you want to treat it like a diesel, you can. Lots of low-down pull makes it easy to drive and to drive quickly without using too many revs. It can spin past 7000rpm but peak torque is achieved below 4000rpm.

Its journey to these numbers is linear and unfussy. It's not theatrical like Alfa Romeo's V6 or quite as lovely or as offbeat as Audi's own five-cylinder engine, but it has its own personality. And when Dynamic mode is selected, there's even a bit of drama with a few exhaust crackles. Sure, it's as digitally augmented as a Black Eyed Peas song, but it's subtle enough for it not to be too cloying, unlike a Black Eyed Peas song.

It has a bit of mild-hybrid tech: a pair of electric motors (one on the engine, one on the automatic gearbox) and a 1.7kWh battery. This adds 24bhp and apparently allows for some electric-only running.

I did not experience said electric ▸

"The suspension set-up is lush. I could use it on a daily basis, even in its firmest setting"

TESTER'S NOTE

The ADAS functions are pretty intrusive. Not with short, sharp, sudden nudges, like with a Volvo, but constant small adjustments. The lane keeping assistance is ready and far too willing to interrupt. Not what you want from a sporty SUV. **MSc**

◂ running. The integration works fine when you're going but causes a problem when you're stopping: there's a bit of a pedal push required to get onto the disc and the force needed isn't always the same. The problem isn't insurmountable, just slightly irritating. Not being 100% sure of how hard to press the brake pedal isn't great in a car that's as large and as powerful as this.

The SQ5 comes with air suspension as standard. Some petrolheads sound like broken records when it comes to Audi suspension, repeating old lines about shattered teeth, largely associated with S Line cars of a decade ago. But the SQ5's set-up is lush. I could use it on a daily basis, even in its firmest setting. It all seems very connected, well thought out. Comfortable but with enough heft and damping not to make it feel like a burly, two-tonne SUV.

The steering is quite light – Dynamic mode firms it up a little – but feedback is strong.

Its sure-footedness means you have to go a bit asbo to have much fun driving it, but fun is possible.

The square steering 'wheel' is easy to use on a set of flowing bends, but I found it difficult to use on roundabouts. It almost forces you not to shuffle the wheel at all, which really isn't ideal because I, like most SQ5 drivers, am not blatting through Tertre Rouge but negotiating a Tesco car park.

When left to its own devices, the seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox is pretty handy. When the drive mode selector is switched to Dynamic, it changes down quickly and with gusto; in Comfort, it's less keen to swap cogs. Things begin to fall down when you change gears yourself. Pull the left shifter in Dynamic when approaching a corner and you feel the whole car jump forward ever so slightly. It's a BMW-esque thump in the back that's supposed to say 'hey, kiddo, you're driving a performance car', but it's just jarring to me.

Then we get on to the paddles themselves. Tiny and plastic, they would feel just about okay for a Skoda. They're not befitting of a £50,000 Audi Q5 and they're nowhere near the quality I would expect for a £75,000 Audi SQ5.

Pull your hand away from the Temu paddles and you will find another peculiarity in the interior: a control panel where you might expect to find the window switches. Those switches are there, too, but accompanied by quite a few other buttons. Those for the foglights, for instance. This isn't so bad in isolation, but if you don't tend to close car doors using their handles, you will end up turning the fogs on – as I and several other testers did.

The SQ5's interior is very much like that of the electric Q6 E-tron. Up front, there's an 11.9in Virtual Cockpit behind the wheel, a 14.5in touchscreen in the middle and another, 10.9in touchscreen for the front passenger.

They're all suitably slick, easy to control and logical. The passenger can use their screen to alter the sat-nav or radio, helping the driver, or to watch videos, invisibly to the driver. So there will be no scrolling TikTok from behind the wheel, thank God.

The real lede here, though, is

Coupé look doesn't come at the expense of much storage space

Steering impresses but would be improved by a wheel-shaped wheel

Rear is even more spacious than before and seats can tilt back

that, like the Q6 E-tron, the SQ5 has very few physical buttons inside. The climate controls are on the central touchscreen. They get their own dedicated bar at the bottom, are shown permanently and respond quickly, but that's still not ideal. At least they're not haptic like in Audis of old, so you don't need to press down hard like you're trying to delete an app from your phone.

Material quality seems fine – just fine – but, to my eyes and hands, the tiny little drive selector, nicked from a Skoda Enyaq, that you pull backwards or push forwards feels cheap and a bit apologetic.

It won't have escaped your attention that this is a review of the Sportback version of the SQ5. This slope-roofed variant was first introduced in 2021 and in continental Europe it actually outsells the regular SUV. Not in Britain, though. Must be something to do with it offering less space for more money. Then again, the difference in boot space between SUV and Sportback is barely worth mentioning. So basically, if you prefer the coupé look, go for it.

It's a really solid car, this SQ5. And one befitting of its performance-oriented badging. It's fast, comfortable and practical and the Sportback shape is innovative and adds a bit of surprise and delight.

Criticisms? The powertrain and suspension add up to a £75,000 experience but the interior has too many small foibles – ones that, when tallied, make the price tag questionable.

MURRAY SCULLION

TECH SPEC

AUDI SQ5 SPORTBACK

Audi's S badge shown in possibly its best light. Comfortable, quick and subtle. Expensive, mind you

Price £76,930
Engine V6, 2995cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus 48V ISG
Power 362bhp at 5500-6300rpm
Torque 406lb ft at 1700-4000rpm
Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 2040kg
0-62mph 4.5sec
Top speed 155mph
Economy 32.1-34.0mpg
CO_2, tax band 188-199g/km, 37%
Rivals BMW X4 M40i, Mercedes-AMG GLC 43 Coupé, Porsche Macan GTS

TESTED 21.2.25, MALAGA, SPAIN **DELIVERIES** SPRING

AUDI Q5

SUV moves onto PPC platform for third era. So what else is new?

Naturally, a new SQ5 also means a new Q5. The regular SUV offers the Volkswagen Group's familiar 2.0-litre petrol and diesel engines, as well as virtually the same interior as the SQ5.

The diesel is the one to go for. It doles out effortless slugs of torque that work well with the seven-speed dual-clutch automatic and the same mild-hybrid tech you get in the SQ5.

The integration of the three driveline elements is weighted in favour of the diesel engine, because of its relaxed nature. The petrol needs to rev a fair bit to get going and the gearbox feels the need to shuffle numbers slightly too much for a truly relaxed ride, whereas the diesel just seems to glide on by.

I drove only Q5s on air suspension, which will be a £1725 option in the UK. Both petrol and diesel variants coped with wrinkle-free Spanish roads wonderfully. Comfort mode – with everything dialled back – is smooth, pliant and amenable to the demands of the road. It irons out nearly all potholes but isn't so soft that it throws you down an elevation change only to have you bounce out the other side. Whether it can do it on a cold, rainy night in Stoke remains to be seen.

The steering, much like with the SQ5, is a touch light but does give some feedback.

Air suspension gives a lovely ride – but it isn't standard

The Q5 isn't the last word in dynamic prowess but is broadly more enjoyable than the class average. Importantly, it's easy to place, which is handy because, at 1900mm across it's hardly slimline, albeit marginally less wide than the Mercedes-Benz GLC or BMW X3.

Practicality has improved from the old Q5. The wheelbase is a touch longer, which has freed up a bit of leg space for rear-seat passengers. An adult can sit behind an adult driver with ease and the rear seats can be moved lengthways and tilted, aiding flexibility. Boot space is 520 litres – similar to before – or 515 litres with the Sportback bodystyle.

The Q5 is a good car, then, and a very natural selection in a sea of premium mid-size SUVs. It could fit into most people's lifestyles with ease. The families who flocked to the old Q5 won't be disappointed.

The Edition 1 car tested here is pricey, as you might imagine, but bottom-spec Sport models offer a useful £10,000 discount.

MURRAY SCULLION

TECH SPEC

AUDI Q5 TDI EDITION 1

A case of evolution over revolution for this mid-sized SUV, which isn't really a bad thing

Price £62,380
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1968cc, turbocharged, diesel, plus 48V ISG
Power 201bhp at 3800-4200rpm
Torque 295lb ft at 1750-3250rpm
Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 1955kg
0-62mph 7.4sec
Top speed 140mph
Economy 41.5-44.1mpg
CO_2, tax band 167-178g/km, 37%
Rivals Alfa Romeo Stelvio 2.2 D, BMW X3 xDrive20d, Mercedes-Benz GLC 220d

TESTED 27.2.25, NICE, FRANCE **DELIVERIES** MAY

VOLKSWAGEN TAYRON

All-new seven-seat SUV slots in between the Tiguan and Touareg

Those of you who know your Chinese cars will be aware of the name Tayron, from a crossover produced collaboratively by Volkswagen and FAW. This year, though, the Tayron will go global, with a new model plugging the gap formerly filled by the Tiguan Allspace, offering seven seats and a wide-ranging powertrain selection.

This new Tayron is far bigger than the Chinese version. Measuring 4792mm, it's slightly longer than the Tiguan Allspace, and while it's based on the same MQB Evo platform as the latest Tiguan (see p56) and has remarkably similar styling, Volkswagen claims it's a unique car with no shared panels.

The Tayron's powertrain range is one of the most versatile in the Volkswagen line-up.

The petrol engines are a 1.5-litre mild-hybrid turbo four with 148bhp and a 2.0-litre turbo four with either 201bhp or 261bhp and the choice of front- or four-wheel drive.

Then there are two diesels, with 148bhp (FWD) and 190bhp (4WD).

Finally, there are two plug-in hybrid systems, with 201bhp and 268bhp. They team the 1.5-litre petrol four with a 113bhp electric motor in the six-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox and a huge, 19.7kWh battery for an electric-only range of more than 70 miles.

Volkswagen anticipates the PHEVs to be popular in the UK, accounting for around 20% of Tayron sales, even though the battery placement eliminates the option of seven seats.

Our test car was a lesser-powered plug-in hybrid, available from £43,905. A combined output of 201bhp may seem rather puny for a large, near-two-tonne SUV but, thanks to that electric motor, the Tayron sets off quietly and with relative urgency, and with the engine and motor working together it can go from 0-62mph in 8.6sec.

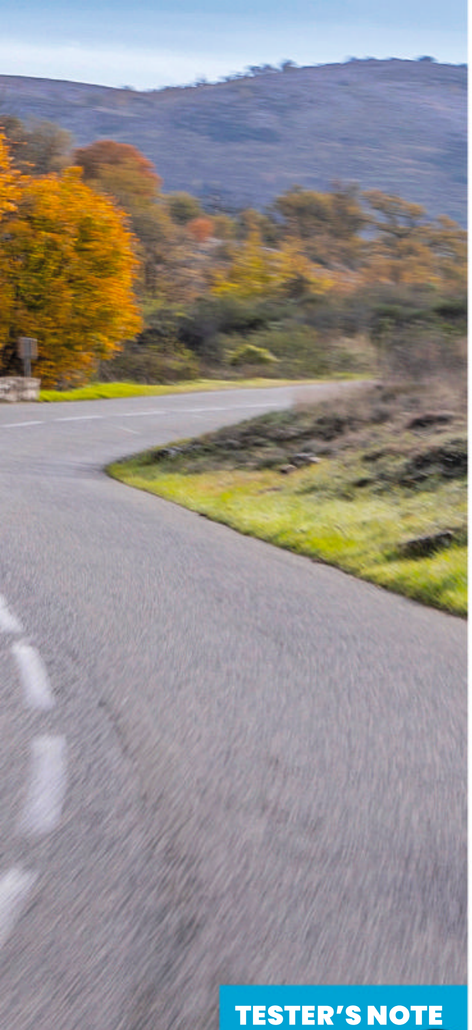
For comparison, the higher-powered PHEV will do 0-62mph in 7.3sec, the 1.5 eTSI in 9.4sec and the FWD 2.0 TDI in 9.7sec, while the punchier 2.0 TSI is by far the quickest, needing just 6.1sec.

In hybrid mode, with a charged battery, the PHEV is silky-smooth and refined, alternating between petrol and electric power seamlessly. Its engine can sound coarse under harder acceleration, but it's quieter than the diesel and petrol cars that we also tried, plus it's no more unpleasant than the rival Hyundai Santa Fe PHEV.

The Tayron is tidy and precise in the corners, although the greater weight of the PHEV is evident through increased body roll. It's an easy car to place, but it lacks any inspiring dynamism and there's a numbness to the steering.

Our plug-in hybrid was fitted with the optional Adaptive Chassis Control, making a noticeable difference in ride comfort compared with the other Tayrons we tested. It felt supple but not wafty in its softest mode, making light

The PHEV we tested had an impressive 72 miles of electric range



Interior isn't as plush as it could be and has very few physical controls

TESTER'S NOTE

I would recommend the DCC adaptive suspension, which is standard only on cars in Life or R-Line trim with a plug-in hybrid powertrain or cars with 4Motion four-wheel drive. It's optional on all other trims. Confusing. **JW**

> "It's easily the best to drive in its class and can be particularly comfortable"

work of speed bumps and potholes.

Another key option on our PHEV test car was acoustic glass, which quietened the cabin and helped to eliminate wind and road noise with great success. It's a shame it's available only on the sportier-looking R-Line and R-Line Edition models equipped with the Black Style Package.

Although the Tayron feels well built inside, it's not a haven of plush materials. Some softer plastics and fabrics are present on the doors and dashboard, but there are still a few too many glossy and scratchy surfaces throughout.

There's a clear feeling that Volkswagen didn't want its newest SUV to cross over too much with the Touareg, the brand's more expensive luxury flagship.

All Tayrons get a 12.9in digital display as standard, plus a 10.25in digital cockpit. A larger, 15.0in infotainment display is available as part of the £1130 Infotainment Package Plus, which also adds a head-up display, several USB-C charging ports and Volkswagen's AI-powered voice assistant, Ida.

Volkswagen's much-maligned climate and volume sliders are present, but they are at least backlit to make for easier night-time operation.

There are just two physical buttons on the centre console, for starting/stopping and the parking brake. But Volkswagen has taken inspiration from Skoda with a new rotary dial that can be customised to control various functions, including media, volume and drive mode. More physical buttons wouldn't go amiss, but the Tayron's interior is certainly a more intuitive space than the Peugeot 5008's.

It's spacious in the Tayron's first two rows, with plenty of leg and head room.

Boot space measures 885 litres in five-seat petrols and diesels, 850 litres in seven-seaters (or 345 litres with the third row in place) and 705 litres in the five-seat-only PHEVs.

The third row is much tighter than that of the 5008; adults will struggle for comfort. The Santa Fe's is also more spacious and provides far more amenities, like USB ports and climate vents.

But it's also much more expensive. The cheapest Tayron (with seven seats), the 1.5 eTSI Match, is priced at £39,850, while the cheapest Santa Fe is the £51,885 PHEV. The Nissan X-Trail is cheaper still, at £35,175.

The Tayron has a slightly unusual set of skills for a large SUV. The PHEV's electric-only range is twice as long as that of the equivalent Santa Fe or Kia Sorento – but then those PHEVs keep their third rows.

It's easily the best in its class to drive and particularly comfortable when fitted with the adaptive dampers, but it offers less space and creature comforts in the third row, and while perceived cabin quality is reasonable, it's not a standout feature either.

Prioritising driving dynamics and plug-in hybrid credentials, the Tayron feels like the large SUV for the driver who needs lots of space only occasionally. With many rivals vying for sales, it's good to have a niche.

JACK WARRICK

TECH SPEC

VOLKSWAGEN TAYRON 1.5 TSI EHYBRID 204PS R-LINE

Has good handling, equipment and practicality, but the best experience is spec-dependent

Price £46,880
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1498cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor
Power 201bhp
Torque 184lb ft
Gearbox 6-spd dual-clutch automatic, FWD
Kerb weight 1864kg
0-62mph 8.6sec
Top speed 130mph
Battery 25.7/19.7kWh (total/usable)
Economy, electric range 565mpg, 72 miles
CO_2, tax band 12g/km, 5%
Rivals Hyundai Santa Fe PHEV, Peugeot 5008 PHEV, Mazda CX-80 PHEV

UK VERDICTS

TESTER'S NOTE
Having the drive modes on a wheel-mounted rotary switch is great. Being kicked out of Apple CarPlay every time you change mode isn't. **VP**

TESTED 3.3.25, SURREY **DELIVERIES** NOW

MASERATI GRANCABRIO FOLGORE

Mega-powerful, tri-motor electric version of convertible GT comes to UK

'Unique' is an oft-misused word, but it really does apply to Maserati's new Grancabrio Folgore: there are very, very few electric convertibles on the market, and this is the only one that has four seats.

Everything about it is ultra rapid, from the 800V electrical architecture for charging at rates of up to 270kW (good enough for 62 miles of range in five minutes) to the tri-motor powertrain that delivers 818bhp for 0-62mph in 2.8sec.

And just look at it. The classic proportions and elegant styling are understated yet still ooze glamour, which is a tricky thing to pull off – especially when you've got 83kWh worth of battery cells to shoehorn into the platform.

So here we are with a £185,610, four-seat, electric cabriolet that's as fast as the Ferrari 296 GTB to 62mph, despite weighing 2.4 tonnes.

How does that translate to UK roads? Well, despite the seemingly nauseating headline figures, the Grancabrio is an enjoyable GT. Forget the outright pace: between the adaptive air suspension and four-wheel drive that it has in common with the 542bhp, V6-engined Grancabrio Trofeo, this is a charming, long-legged cruiser.

The electric drivetrain actually suits it, too. The seamless ebb and flow of acceleration accentuates the general sumptuousness of the Grancabrio, and with the roof down you really enjoy the calm progress.

The V6 has an entirely different appeal precisely because it makes more noise – and good noise at that. But it's a credit to Maserati that you can choose between the two powertrains, and the electric propulsion does work well in the Grancabrio, even if a WLTP range of 279 miles is underwhelming when plenty of touring EVs are now close to 400 miles.

Having said all of that, the Folgore is far from flawless in the way it drives, because that weight is just too noticeable. The ride comfort isn't terrible but the damping is reactive over high-frequency or sharper-edged intrusions at slower speeds and there's a fair bit of body lean if you try to push through faster direction changes.

There is a touch of body flex courtesy of that fabric roof, too (which can fold or raise electrically at vehicle speeds of up to 32mph), although it's minor enough not to really bother you.

The V6-engined Trofeo has notably better handling

The steering is light and has a pleasantly expensive slickness to it, but there's no real feedback and it feels particularly disconnected at the crucial moment when the car is weighted up mid-corner, which isn't what you want in your powerful luxury performance car.

Twisting the drive mode switch that's mounted on the beautifully slim steering wheel doesn't really improve matters, either. Activate Sport or Corsa mode for maximum-attack performance and heavier steering and the Grancabrio Folgore isn't as pointy and rabid as you might expect given its credentials.

Yes, everything feels tauter and there's a satisfying poise to the way the Maserati cuts through corners, but it's not the truly engaging, playful, tactile steer that you might hope for. There's just not enough sense of connection through the wheel or the pedals for that.

Both the Porsche Taycan and the Lotus Emeya saloons are more purist drives, in the rather limited scheme of four-seat electric performance cars.

Even so, as a soft-top cruiser that has potential to spare when you want to terrify your passengers, is peachy to cover miles in the rest of the time, and has a classic grace to its styling that's rare among any class of car? Well, the Grancabrio Folgore has all of that. It's not an objective purchase, so don't try to justify it like that, because you can't. But if you've fallen for the silver-screen looks and boulevard appeal, the experience behind the wheel certainly won't disappoint.

VICKY PARROTT

TECH SPEC

MASERATI GRANCABRIO FOLGORE

Sumptuous and aspirational but not the tactile driver's car we hoped for. Unique in being a convertible but there are better electric GTs

★★★⯪☆

Price £185,610
Engine Three permanent magnet synchronous motors
Power 751bhp (818bhp on overboost)
Torque 996lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2415kg
0-62mph 2.8sec
Top speed 180mph
Battery 92.5/83.0kWh (total/usable)
Range, economy 279 miles, 2.7mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 2%
Rivals Aston Martin DB12 Volante, Bentley Continental GTC, Mercedes-AMG SL 63 S E

TESTER'S NOTE

Going for a higher-end model - now with ambient lighting and Alcantara - would be a bit extravagant. The Qashqai is a simple, functional thing at heart and at its best when kept that way. **MS**

TESTED 19.2.25, WARWICKSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

NISSAN QASHQAI DIG-T

The fancy hybrid is compelling, but what about the cheaper petrol?

Nissan has clearly wanted you to think of its big-selling Qashqai crossover, now three generations and a facelift old, as a kind of reassuringly familiar technological bridge to the future.

Back in 2022, it introduced the ePower version, an innovative series hybrid driven primarily by its electric motor, then promoted it as a smart alternative to either a plug-in hybrid or a fully electric car. It was supposed to deliver an EV feel with none of the usability drawbacks.

But it has turned out that Nissan buyers are still a fairly conservative bunch: six in 10 Qashqais sold in the UK are powered by the more conventional 48V mild-hybrid petrol system in our test car here.

Driven primarily by a 1.3-litre four-cylinder turbocharged petrol engine, it offers 138bhp and 156bhp states of tune and the choice of a six-speed manual gearbox or a CVT, the latter with part-time four-wheel drive if you prefer.

The mild hybrid's really meaningful competitive advantage compared with the ePower version is price. While the more heavy-duty electrification of the latter inflates the price, the former can be had for £3000 less, from little more than £30,000 – and, Nissan assures us, cheaper on monthly finance than an equivalent Hyundai Tucson, Kia Sportage or Skoda Karoq.

The Mk3 Qashqai's big mid-life facelift came last year, bringing a new front grille, new wheels, new colours and fresh light designs, not to mention a significant lift on perceived quality for the interior.

Richer Alcantara trims were added higher up the range, although not in middling models like N-Connecta, as sampled here. It's to Nissan's credit, then, that the fixtures and fittings of even this version of the car look and feel reassuringly solid.

The Qashqai has a new Google-based touchscreen system but retains lots of physical switchgear, with proper heating and ventilation controls and menu shortcut keys among them. As well as bolstering usability, they almost universally have plenty of substance and imbue the interior with a sense of robustness and quality.

The Qashqai's standard on space and practicality is a little above the class average. It's not quite as roomy as a mid-sized SUV like the Volkswagen Tiguan, but it does deliver versatility and convenience considerably above and beyond the reach of a Ford Focus-sized family car for a comparable price.

The 1.3-litre mild-hybrid powertrain makes a slightly ordinary but passable impression from the driver's seat. It feels surprisingly torquey at bumbling revs once the turbocharger has spooled up, although it's not the smoothest engine when engaging on the clutch, the electric assistance failing to cover for the turbocharged engine's momentary lethargy. Drivability is good once the motor is pulling, but it doesn't rev particularly keenly beyond 4000rpm. And it becomes coarser and more thrashy at high revs than you would imagine based on its better manners at lower revs.

This Qashqai is a comfortable cruiser, with a medium-firm but well-isolated ride, tidy body control, contained and assured handling and plenty of notes of slickness and sophistication about its demeanour.

We didn't notice the efforts made by Nissan to grant an easier route to taming its slightly irksome speed limit buzzer and lane keeping assistance systems, sadly. With so many buttons present and correct, this still really ought to be easier.

Even so, it doesn't take long to understand, even in this lower-grade form, how the Qashqai has retained its popularity. It's competent, comfortable, conventional and for the most part just good, wholesome company.
MATT SAUNDERS

TECH SPEC

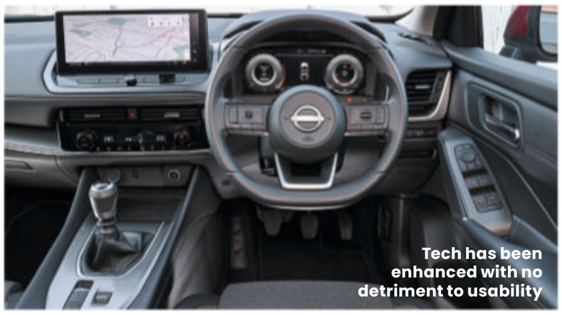
NISSAN QASHQAI DIG-T 158 MILD HYBRID 2WD N-CONNECTA

Simpler and cheaper powertrain is no particular charmer but suits this well-rounded, good-value crossover well enough

★★★⯪☆

Price £33,025
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1332cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus 48V ISG
Power 156bhp at 5500rpm
Torque 192lb ft at 1800-4000rpm
Gearbox 6-spd manual, FWD
Kerb weight 1385kg
0-62mph 9.5sec
Top speed 128mph
Economy 44.1mpg
CO_2, tax band 143g/km, 34%
Rivals Hyundai Tucson, Peugeot 3008

It's not exciting but tidy and safe-feeling – as drivers would expect



Tech has been enhanced with no detriment to usability

ROAD TEST

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5732**

RENAULT 5

Hotly anticipated EV is already Car of the Year. Now for the real test

MODEL TESTED
RENAULT 5 COMFORT RANGE ICONIC FIVE
Price £28,995
Power 148bhp
Torque 181lb ft
0-60mph 7.7sec
30-70mph 7.2sec
Top speed 94mph (claimed)
70-0mph 44.4m (5deg C, dry)
Range 166/161/260 miles (average/touring/everyday)
Economy 3.2/3.1/5.0mpkWh (average/touring/everyday)
Weighted average charging rate 71kW

In some ways it feels like we know the new, reimagined Renault 5 very well already.

It's been four years since the big-wheeled, boldly styled concept car blasted a splash of yellow across our screens. Rather than quietly retreat to Renault's heritage collection, the concept was developed into a production car that looks just as spectacular. And it's not a mere small-series vanity project. The new 5 is here to be Renault's mainstream hatchback, an entry point into its EV line-up. With a headline price of £22,995, it's no more expensive than a mid-spec hybrid Clio.

The 5 has already won a number of awards – not least Car of the Year. Can it add five stars from Autocar to its achievements? We've got a high-spec long-range car to find out.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★★

PROS Eye-catching looks; produced in Europe; competitive battery size; multi-link rear suspension
CONS None

Some cars are all about the engineering, and while the 5 is a lot more than just a pretty face, it's the pretty face that's grabbing all the headlines. The story goes that when Luca de Meo became CEO of the Renault Group in 2021, he surveyed the design studio to get a handle on the new models already coming down the pipeline and found mostly worthy but uninspiring stuff.

Strategically 'left sitting around' was a styling model of a car that looked remarkably like a reinterpretation of the old 5. It was meant to be just a style exercise by designer François Leboine (who has since joined Fiat and Abarth) that wasn't destined for reality because it was too retro. However, de Meo reckoned this had to be Renault's future direction, so engineering was tasked with bringing it to life.

This was turned first into the 5 concept car that was presented at the start of 2021. Back then, a 2023 release date for the production car was mooted, but it has clearly taken a bit longer. Nevertheless, the design of that original concept has been largely maintained. The production car doesn't stray too far from those lines, and keeps the short overhangs, big wheels and features characteristic of the 5. By and large, it was a case of fitting the mechanicals – some new, some off the shelf – under this new design.

In 2022, Renault hived off its EV and software activities into Ampere, a dedicated new business parallel to its combustion-engine joint venture with Geely called Horse. One of Ampere's tasks was to develop an architecture fit for Renault's new electric plans, and the result is the Ampr Small platform, which will also underpin the upcoming Renault 4 and Twingo.

Production car is faithful to 2021 concept

Renault says there are minimal similarities and shared parts or software with the CMF platform, which, unlike Ampr, does double duty for both electric and combustion-engined models.

However, it is still modular, so that existing components could be repurposed where appropriate. As such, the 5 uses a combination of the familiar and the new. For instance, the front-axle assembly is from the Clio and Captur, and the rear multi-link axle was adapted from the four-wheel-drive version of the Dacia Duster. The latter was chosen because in such a small car the trailing arms of the more common torsion beam axle would intrude into the space for the battery pack. Of course, it also brings ride and handling benefits and puts it on an equal footing with the Mini Cooper E.

The battery itself, despite being available with the same two capacities as the old Zoe (40kWh and 52kWh), is rather different. For one, it is now liquid-cooled (like in most modern EVs) rather than just air-cooled, to ensure it maintains its performance in a wider range of conditions, and is up to being DC rapid-charged at up to 90kW for the small version and 100kW for the larger one. It also has a very different configuration, with fewer separate modules and more cells to a module.

The 5 is assembled in Douai, France, and Renault says most suppliers are located within a 300km radius. From the summer of 2025, this will include the battery packs, which are produced from the raw materials (rather than just assembled from imported cells) in a new facility set up with AESC Envision.

INTERIOR

★★★★½

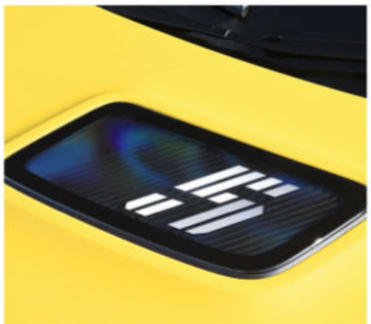
PROS Design is distinctive and attractive, yet also user-friendly and modern; outstanding quality for the price point; purposeful driving position
CONS Oddment storage space could be optimised further; tinny-feeling doors

The exterior's retro theme extends to the interior, where the designers have carefully cherry-picked classic design elements and combined them with 21st-century tech to create something that is instantly recognisable as a Renault 5, yet also original, modern and easy to use.

The passenger side of the dashboard, with its ribbed stitching, clearly takes inspiration from late ▶

■ All Renault 5s, down to the entry-level trims, get 18in wheels. This multi-spoke design is unique to the Iconic Five trim, whereas most other versions get a more ornate six-spoke one.

■ Vertical, deep red rear lights are a clear nod to the original Renault 5s. Get up close and you'll notice the design is surprisingly intricate, with horizontal ribs across the light cluster and a small air vent on the side.



■ The original 5 had a distinctive asymmetric air vent on its bonnet. This has been reinterpreted as a charge indicator, with segments of the 5 lighting up according to the battery's state of charge.

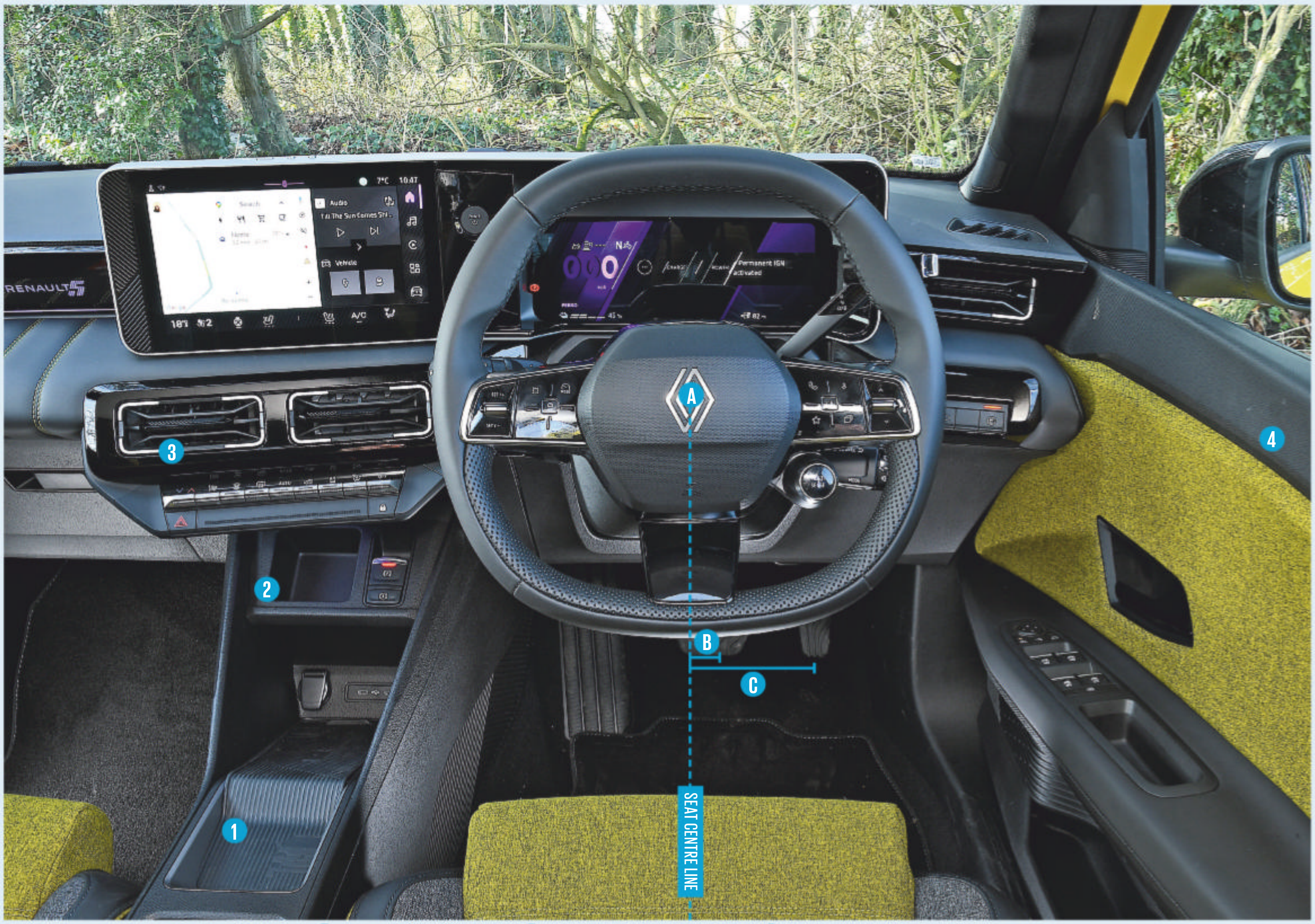
■ The main light cluster contains a 'pupil' that can wink when the car is turned on. The LED headlights are fairly powerful and the auto-dipping function works well, but matrix LEDs are not available.

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN BRADSHAW

① and ② It's unclear what you're supposed to use the smaller tray and the tiny cubby for. They're too small and shallow to be useful. There's a catalogue of accessories, which let you turn the cupholders into a bin or a tray.

③ The design cue of the four rounded corners returns in a few places on the 5. The most prominent are the daytime-running lights and these air vents. The climate settings can be easily adjusted using the button panel underneath.

④ Door cappings are made of hard plastic, which is a bit of a shame, but they have a nice texture and your attention is typically drawn to the fabric instead. Most trims swap this eye-catching yellow for a bluish-grey denim-like fabric.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 50mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 180mm right. There's a wide range of (manual) adjustment to the driving position. Pedals are mostly conventional, but the brake pedal sits annoyingly high relative to the accelerator.

◂ versions of the first-generation Renault 5, but the big instrument binnacle that now integrates two 10in screens is more reminiscent of the mid-engined Renault 5 Turbos, as are the unusually shaped seats, with their seemingly free-standing side bolsters.

Renault has also deployed colours and materials to very good effect. All seat upholstery in the 5 is fabric made from recycled plastic bottles. Some might miss the option of leather (the related Alpine A290 does offer it), but most testers found the soft material very welcoming, particularly when specified in the striking yellow of our test car. It's a breath of fresh air compared with the often dour colour schemes of new cars.

Many expensive new cars are blighted by an interior that is stripped of quality materials and intricate details to drink in, which makes you question what you are spending all of that cash on. The Renault 5 is quite the opposite. With the price tag cut off, you would guess it to be one of the more expensive cars in its class. Instead, it's one of the cheapest.

You can, of course, find harder, scratchier plastics in the 5, but that's a given in this segment. Even those materials feel high quality. If there is a lapse in perceived quality, it's the tinny sound of the door panel when you open and close it.

Renault hasn't skimped on physical controls either. It's not that the designers have gone button-mad like Ineos or Hyundai (an approach we're not against), but the controls that are there are carefully chosen and laid out, and work very well with the touchscreen, to create a user interface that you simply don't need to think twice about on a day-to-day basis.

It's just so intuitive to use. There are conventional controls for the mirrors, and there's a row of rocker switches for the climate control, complemented by a permanent control bar on the touchscreen.

One slight annoyance is the column stalk-type drive selector. This arrangement works well in a Mercedes, but in the Renault the drive selector is joined on the right-hand side of the steering column by the wiper stalk and the media control widget, which can cause confusion. The 5 also doesn't have a 'park' setting, though you get used to simply putting on the handbrake when you've finished driving.

The benefit of a column shifter is that the centre console remains free for storage. In the Renault 5, it's not a very wide space, but it does include a wireless phone charging tray, two generous cupholders and a decently sized armrest cubby.

It all adds up to a great driving environment, and the final piece of this puzzle is present and correct too: the 5 has a nicely resolved driving position. Past Renaults often suffered from a shortness of leg room and thigh support, but that's not the case in the 5. Although the seats don't have cushion angle adjustment, their default position is semi-recumbent. This supports taller drivers' legs very well but may be less comfortable for shorter drivers. The steering column offers plenty of manual adjustment too.

MULTIMEDIA

★★★★☆

PROS Fast and intuitive; Google integration; charge planner; phone companion app works well
CONS Some smaller quirks to the Google navigation

The 5's OpenR Link infotainment system is based on Google's Android Automotive and is fundamentally the same as you will find in the Megane, Austral and most other recent Renaults. The difference is that in the 5 it lives on a slightly smaller, 10.1in screen. This means that the interface is more squeezed and, as such, not quite as easy to use.

By and large, however, Renault's system is one of the better ones out there. It responds quickly, important functions can be accessed with big virtual buttons and the menu structures are fairly simple. Unlike the interface on Minis, it doesn't sacrifice clarity for gimmicky graphics, either.

Renault touts its Google connection more clearly than Porsche (which uses the same Android Automotive foundations in the Macan Electric), and you can log in with a Google account. This means that if you've searched for a destination in Google Maps on your phone, it will appear in the recent destinations in the car's navigation system (which is simply Google Maps). That's very handy, as is Google's traffic information and route planning.

The charge planner (which plots your route via rapid chargers if your destination is out of range) is very good too: it has up-to-date information about chargers and lets you easily swap in alternative chargers if you don't like the ones the software has suggested.

One annoyance with Google Maps is that it insists on asking you about road conditions: whether there's still a car stopped on the hard shoulder, or whether there's police around. It does this with a prominent dialog box that blocks more useful information like the remaining time and distance until you press on it. It's distracting and can't be turned off.

Apple CarPlay and Android Auto are both wireless, quite reliable and integrate well with the car's native interface.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

PROS Quick enough; progressive accelerator and regen; braking performance and pedal feel

TECH FOCUS

The 5 makes significant gains in terms of sustainability and repairability, says Renault.

The battery consists of a limited number of modules (four in the larger pack, three in the smaller version), which can be removed separately for repair or replacement, rather than requiring the whole pack to be replaced. However, it does still use NMC chemistry, rather than the cobalt-free LFP.

The motors are a development of those found in the Megane and Scenic but they're smaller and lighter, since they don't need to be as powerful. Like those, they are separately excited synchronous units rather than permanent magnet ones, since those don't need rare earth metals. The more powerful Alpine A290 effectively uses the motors from the Megane.

IN THE BACK

The 5 is unapologetically a small car. At 3922mm, it is shorter than a Clio (4053mm), and despite small overhangs, the 5's wheelbase is shorter than the Clio's as well.

As a result, passenger space is inevitably limited. Accessing the rear seats is easier than in the Mini Cooper E thanks to the rear doors, but once in, occupants won't have a great deal more leg room. The 610mm on offer is about midway between the Fiat 500e (530mm) and the Mini Aceman (710mm). While tall adults won't be comfortable in the back of a 5, children should be fine.

Thanks to relatively large windows, the rear seat area is at least quite airy. Although there's no option of a glass roof and the headliner is a dark grey, the latter has an unusual waffle texture, lending some visual interest. There's little in the way of amenities. A centre armrest, climate vents and USB charge ports are all absent.

FRONT Leg room 1060mm, head room 1020mm. Driving position isn't as low as the Mini Cooper's, but nor do you feel perched atop the battery.

REAR Leg room 610mm, head room 910mm. The Renault 5 may have rear doors, but the space they reveal is very tight.

IN THE BOOT

Given its small exterior dimensions, the 5 finds a reasonable balance when it comes to practicality. It hasn't sacrificed boot space for more rear leg room and leaves 277 litres, with a further 27-litre compartment under the floor that's ideal for a set of cables.

That's more than the Mini Cooper E's 210 litres but less than the Peugeot e-208's 311 litres. We would have liked to see a variable-height boot floor like in the Mini, given that the Renault's loading lip is quite high and folding down the rear seats leaves a big step. With the drive motor and power electronics at the front, there is no space for a front luggage compartment.

BOOT Length 605-1210mm, width 980-1005mm, height 560-820mm. Decent space for the class, and there's a further 27 litres under the floor.

“Its ride and handling balance is rarely seen at this end of the market”

CONS No freewheeling or one-pedal modes; rivals are quicker

Horsepower wars rage on in other segments, but things remain relatively peaceful in the small hatchback class. With 148bhp, the Renault 5 sits about midway between Stellantis offerings like the Citroën ë-C3 and Fiat Panda on the one hand, and feistier products like the 215bhp Mini Cooper SE. A 0-62mph time of 8.2sec makes the Renault usefully quick, even if that’s 0.3sec shy of the quoted time.

For those who desire more performance, there’s always the Alpine version with 174bhp or 215bhp. We noted only a marginal amount of deterioration in performance with the battery at a low state of charge.

Drivability is well resolved, with an accelerator pedal that is nicely progressive in the standard mode. It doesn’t feel like the software is artificially limiting power, and while there is a kickdown switch at the end of the pedal, you don’t need to push past it to get full reserves.

You don’t get much choice in terms of regen: D mode gives you very light deceleration when lifting off, whereas B mode ramps it up to be quite strong. It’s just a missed opportunity not to offer drivers true freewheeling and one-pedal modes.

Special praise goes to the braking system and performance. It’s on a par for stopping distances with the Kia EV3 in both the dry and the wet, and outperforms the Cupra Born VZ by some margin. Even more impressive is the brake pedal feel. It uses a by-wire system, which results in a reassuringly firm pedal that is easier to modulate than almost any other EV or plug-in hybrid.

HANDLING & STABILITY

★★★★☆

PROS Fun to drive, without being too aggressive; deals with choppy roads well

CONS Steering response could be more linear

With the Mini Cooper, the electric supermini segment already has its class clown. There’s plenty to like about its pointy, adjustable and puppyish handling, but its excitable ride can get wearing. This leaves room for a car that takes a more relaxed approach. With the verve of French cars of old, the Renault 5 dives right into this gap.

It impresses with nicely fluid handling. At 1461kg on the weighbridge, it’s a good deal lighter than the Mini, and the suspension works with this weight. While the

It handles deftly and is better behaved than the electric Mini Cooper

Suspension and 18in wheels keep drivers well isolated from surface imperfections

THESE RENAULT 5s GO TO 11

As car makers tighten their belts and cut non-essential models from their line-up, you might not expect Renault to bother with a hot version of its affordable electric hatchback, much less two. That's exactly what it is doing, though.

Seemingly the most financially ill-advised is the Renault 5 Turbo 3E, which looks fundamentally like a Renault 5 but has bespoke bodywork and its own platform. In the spirit of the original mid-engined Renault 5 Turbo, it is rear-wheel drive thanks to dual rear motors.

Being effectively a separate model that shares next to nothing with existing Renaults, it seems inconceivable that it would reach production, but Renault plans to build at least 150 of them, with a price tag under £200,000.

Wild Renault 5 Turbo 3E concept will make production next year

So it won't be cheap, but there's also a more attainable option that is already on sale: the Alpine A290. Despite having the badging of a different brand, this is much more clearly the hot hatch version of the Renault 5. It uses the same battery but with an upgraded motor making 174bhp or 215bhp, depending on the trim level.

More significantly, it has an altered chassis, with a different front subframe and tweaked springs, dampers, anti-roll bars and hydraulic bump stops. The A290 also has a wider track with different wheels that are an inch larger than on the Renault, and tyres that are bespoke to the Alpine. Those changes were enough to make it our best fun EV of 2025 (Autocar, 26 February).

But given the standard Renault 5 is already great to drive, it raises the question of whether the Alpine is worth the £4500 extra. Having driven both the 5 and A290 on road and track, we think the Alpine has clear added value for the keen driver. Its steering has more natural response and weight, and provides more feedback about grip levels, which on dry roads are higher than in the Renault.

The Alpine stands up far better to track use. Whereas the Renault's Continental EcoContact tyres got hot very quickly and lost some of their turn-in bite, this was not the case with the Alpine's Michelin Pilot Sport rubber. The Alpine also has a more throttle-adjustable balance, which can be enjoyed to the fullest because it allows you to deactivate the stability control completely using a physical button next to the steering wheel.

A290 is Alpine's first EV and arguably the first proper electric hot hatch

short wheelbase, wide tracks and suspension that is ultimately built to a cost mean large bumps are dealt with rather than simply absorbed, the 5's vertical body control is miles more settled than the Mini's.

There's body roll, sure, but it builds gradually and naturally to add definition to the way the 5 negotiates a corner. Even on economy-focused tyres, there's no shortage of grip, whether on wet or dry roads. The front end has plenty of bite, and a mid-corner lift of the accelerator will rotate the car nicely.

When enjoying a twisty road, it is worth turning 'off' the traction control, which can cut in a little early and limit power too much. It's never fully off, and the stability control always remains on, so there's little chance of things getting out of hand. The 'traction control off' mode works reasonably as a sport mode, but the Mini Cooper E is more sophisticated in this respect, with its faster-acting system that also adds torque vectoring by braking.

With 2.5 turns lock to lock, the 5's steering isn't particularly quick. However, like on other recent Renaults, it is slightly peculiarly tuned to be very keen around the straight-ahead, and less so when you've got some lock wound on. Some testers enjoyed the feeling of agility this gives, while others found this behaviour presents a slight barrier to being smooth with your inputs. With that said, the effect isn't as pronounced as it is on the Megane or Austral, and it suits the lower-slung 5 hatchback more than those taller cars. Relatively strong self-centring gives the steering some weight, but there's not much in the way of feedback.

As a car to go for a drive in, the Renault 5 is beaten by the Mini, which has that bit more texture to its steering and is more throttle-adjustable. However, the Renault is far from outclassed, which is impressive given this is the standard version and not the hot Alpine.

COMFORT & ISOLATION

★★★★⯪

PROS Supple ride; good noise isolation at speed

CONS Occasionally noisy suspension

The handling is doubly impressive given that the Renault 5 manages to combine it with quite a mature ride quality for the class.

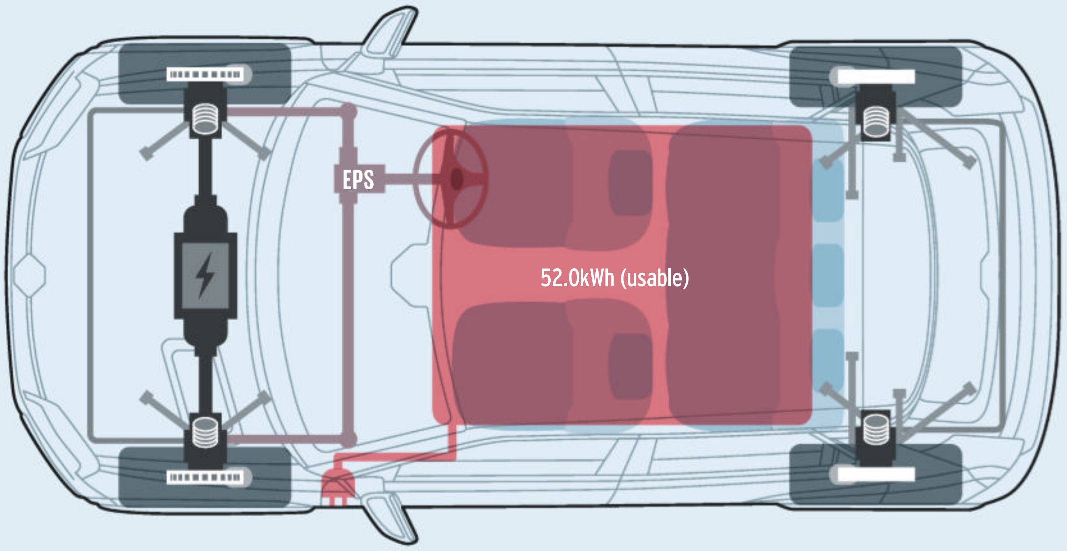
As already mentioned, a bit of fidgeting and head toss is almost impossible to avoid, but the 5 feels generally quite settled. Certainly, it's much closer to cars from the class above, such as the Kia EV3 and MG 4 EV, than to direct rivals like the Mini Cooper E and Peugeot e-208.

Poorly surfaced roads, potholes and corrugations don't faze the Renault either. All 5s ride on 18in wheels with 195/55 tyres, and it would seem that picking one optimal wheel/tyre package and developing the rest of the suspension to work in harmony has paid dividends because the secondary ride is rarely harsh – at worst, it can be slightly noisy.

Meanwhile, at a cruise, the 5 proves quiet by class standards. At 70mph, 68dBA is on a par with the bigger, more expensive EV3. ▸

Its 260 miles of range in sub-50mph driving was better than advertised

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION



RENAULT 5 COMFORT RANGE ICONIC FIVE

On-the-road price £28,995
Price as tested £30,195
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £14,400
Contract hire £385 pcm (£2310 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles, without optional paint)
Typical PCP £393 pcm (£4500 deposit, £955 dealer contribution + 36 months/30,000 miles, £13,786 balloon payment)
Insurance group 22E

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard 18in alloy wheels, LED headlights, keyless entry, automatic climate control, two 10in screens, connected navigation, heated seats and steering wheel, adaptive cruise control, blindspot monitoring
Optional Yellow paint, black roof, red accent line £1200
Also available Side and roof decal £400, three-pin charger £180

MOTOR & BATTERY

Installation Front, transverse, FWD
Type Synchronous motor with coiled rotor
Power 148bhp
Torque 181lb ft
Maximum rpm 14,000rpm
Maximum regen capacity 95kW
Battery type NMC
Capacity 52.0kWh (usable)
Voltage 400V
Power to weight 102bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 125lb ft per tonne

TECHNICAL LAYOUT

The Renault 5's mechanical layout is mostly conventional for a mainstream electric car, with a battery pack in the floor, a single motor in the front and a single-speed reduction gear. It's unusual in its class for its multi-link rear suspension, which comes from the all-wheel-drive Dacia Duster and would presumably allow for an additional rear motor.

GEARBOX

Type 1-spd reduction gear
Reduction ratio na

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel monocoque
Weight/as tested 1449kg/1461kg
Weight distribution (f/r) 57%/43%
Drag coefficient na
Wheels 6.5Jx18in
Tyres 195/55 R18 98H, Continental EcoContact 6Q R
Spare None (mobility kit)

SUSPENSION

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Rear Multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar

STEERING

Type EPAS, rack and pinion
Turns lock to lock 2.5
Turning circle 10.3m

BRAKES

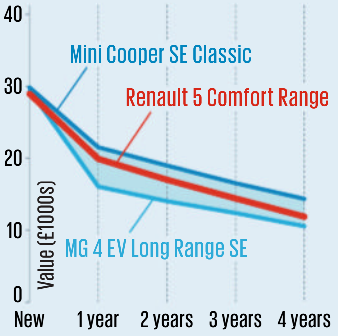
Front 296mm ventilated discs, single-piston calipers
Rear 280mm solid discs, single-piston calipers
Handbrake type Electronic, switch

SAFETY

Passive measures Front and front side airbags, rear side airbags, front and rear Isofix points, QRescue
Euro NCAP rating 4 stars (2024) Adult occupant 80%, child occupant 80%, vulnerable road users 76%, safety assist 68%

EMISSIONS & TAX

CO_2 0g/km
BIK at 20/40% pcm £10/£20



DEPRECIATION

CAP predicts fairly strong residual values for the 5, certainly in the early years, though the Mini's desirability is hard to top. Values should keep pace with a hybrid Renault Clio's.

◂ You can hear a bit of wind rustling around the mirrors, but road noise is exceptionally hushed.

ASSISTED DRIVING

★★★★☆

PROS Annoying systems are easily turned off; useful systems generally work well
CONS No standard cruise control; blindspot monitoring is reserved for the top trim level

Renault has a pleasingly no-nonsense attitude to the various mandatory driver assistance systems. On all of its latest models (and those of Dacia), it's possible to create a 'My Safety Perso' profile, where you choose which systems you want and which ones you don't. When you start the car thereafter, it takes simply two presses of one physical button to call up this configuration.

As for the useful systems, they are generally quite well resolved. We experienced no false activations of the emergency braking (which works forwards and in reverse), and the adaptive cruise control (which is standard on all but the entry-level trim) is smooth and responsive.

Switching the automatic lane following on or off is easily done using a steering wheel button. We just wish there was a standard non-adaptive cruise control mode. Blindspot monitoring is reserved for the top trim and doesn't have an audible warning.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★★☆

PROS Competitive pricing, both for cash and on finance; good suburban economy and range
CONS Poor efficiency and range at motorway speeds

While the higher segments have their horsepower wars, manufacturers at this end of the market are trading blows on price. Shortly after the launch of the Renault 5, its main rival the Mini Cooper E got a substantial price cut. It also has the Citroën ë-C3 to contend with, so while the 5 is certainly good value, it's not a complete bargain.

Prices start from £22,995 for the 40kWh Urban Range model in Evolution trim. That's £1000 more than the entry-level ë-C3, but several thousand pounds less than a Cooper E. The sweet spot of the line-up is probably the 52kWh Comfort Range in Techno trim, which adds the connected infotainment system, a centre armrest, a wireless charger, and the charge indicator on the bonnet, plus useful extra range.

The big annoyance here is that it lacks heated seats, which are important for keeping warm on short journeys without affecting the range too much by using the heater. In other countries, heated seats can be added with a separate option pack, but in the UK you need to upgrade to Iconic Five. However, even if you do, the Renault 5 is only as expensive as a Cooper SE with a similar level of equipment, and much cheaper than a Peugeot e-208.

On a three-year PCP with a £4500 deposit, the Renault is priced closely to the Mini. For a similar outlay, you could also get a bigger and longer-range, but less upmarket, MG 4 Long Range SE.

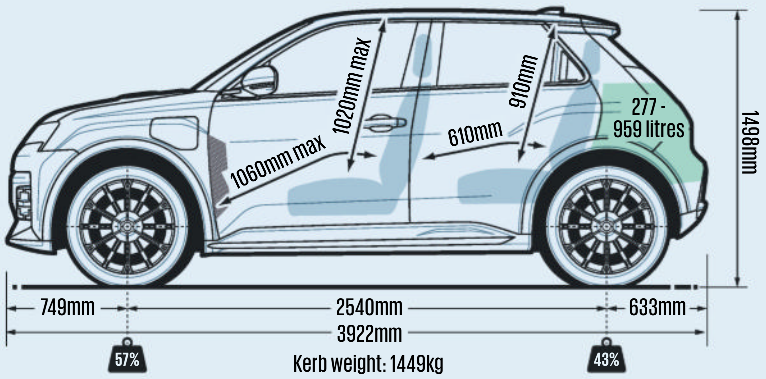
Based on the results of our rapid-charging tests, there's very little in it between the 5, Cooper SE and any of the 51kWh 154bhp Stellantis EVs.

In terms of the 5's efficiency, our test procedure paints a very mixed picture. It returned 5.0mpkWh on our everyday test, which mimics town and suburban driving with speeds of up to 50mph. This is a great result and equates to 260 miles of range. However, as soon as you venture onto the motorway and go over 60mph, efficiency plummets. We saw 3.1mpkWh on the 70mph touring test, which translates to a motorway range of only 161 miles.

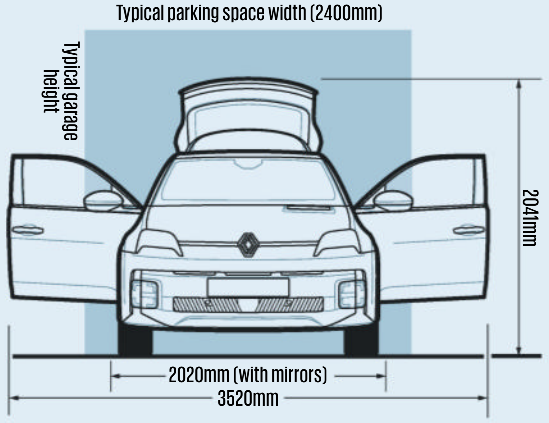
There will be plenty of buyers for whom this will be a fair compromise, and the cold temperatures during our test were unfavourable (despite the Renault 5's standard heat pump). Equally, you would expect a well-appointed £30,000 car to be more capable of long-distance driving. ▸

TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS


1020mm max
910mm
277 - 959 litres
1498mm
610mm
1060mm max
749mm
2540mm
633mm
3922mm
57%
43%
Kerb weight: 1449kg

PARKING

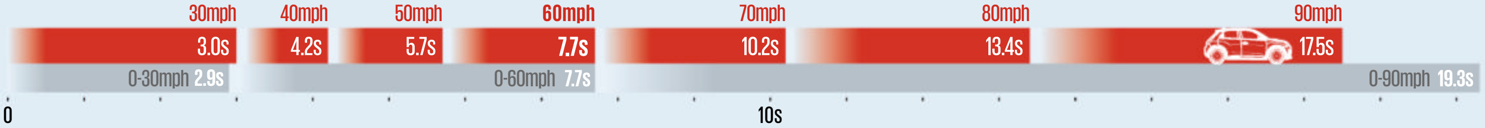

Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
2041mm
2020mm (with mirrors)
3520mm

ACCELERATION

▨ Acceleration at <10% charge

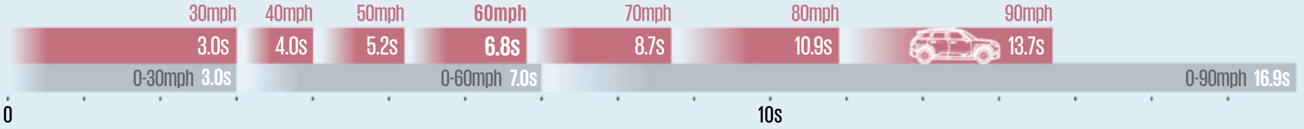
Test conditions 5deg C, dry

Standing quarter mile 16.1sec at 87.0mph **Standing km** 30.5sec at 94.0mph **30-70mph** 7.2sec **50-80mph** 7.6sec **0-62mph** 8.2sec



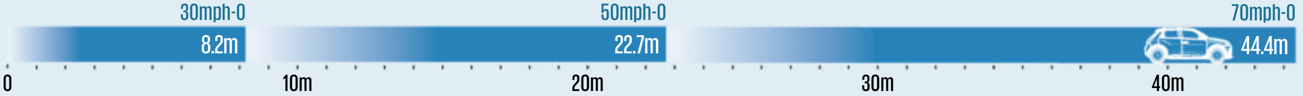
Mini Aceman SE Exclusive (2025, -1 deg C, slippery)

Standing quarter mile 15.3sec at 95.0mph **Standing km** 28.1sec at 105.2mph **30-70mph** 5.7sec **50-80mph** 5.7sec **0-62mph** 7.1sec

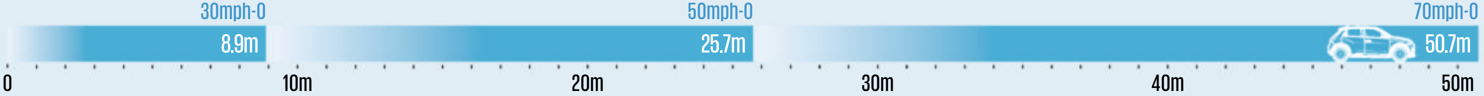


BRAKING

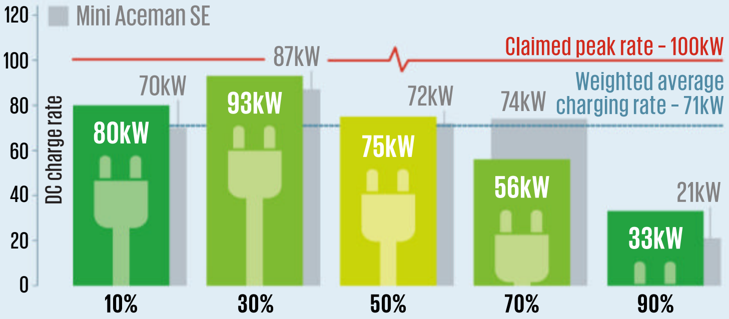
Dry 60-0mph 2.65sec



Wet 60-0mph 2.98sec

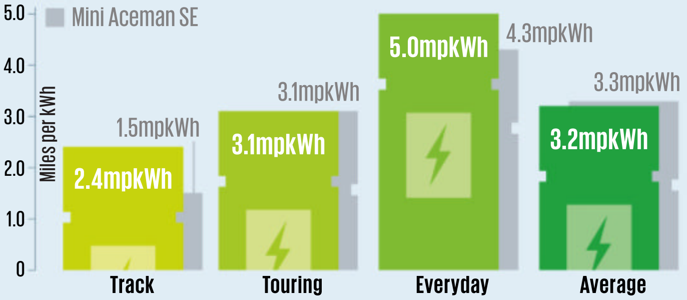


RAPID-CHARGING PERFORMANCE

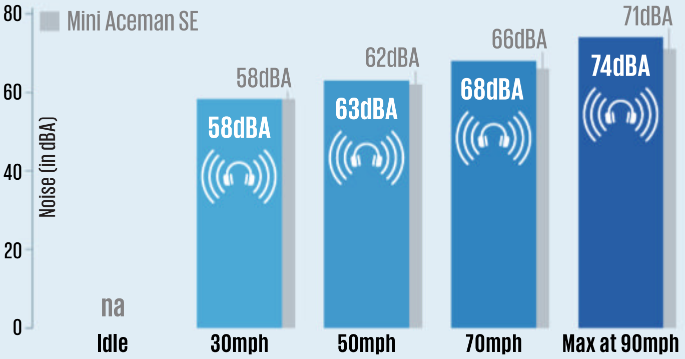


RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 248 miles, 4.2mpkWh (combined) **Test range** 166/161/260 miles (average/touring/everyday)

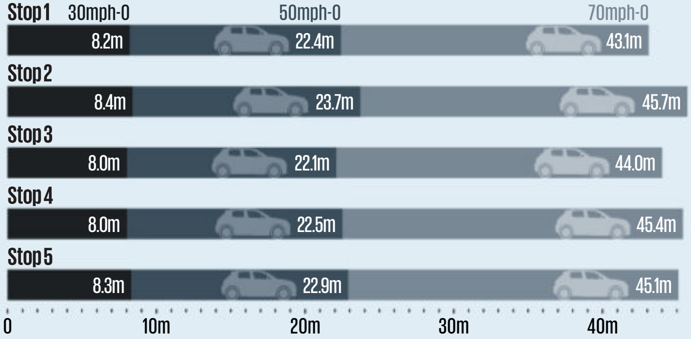


CABIN NOISE



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: 2.0m



THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission. For information on the 5, contact Renault UK, The Rivers Office Park, Denham Way, Maple Cross, Rickmansworth, WD3 9YS (0344 335 000, renault.co.uk).

PETER LIDDIARD

TESTERS' NOTES

ILLYA VERPRAET
Is the Renault 5 a retro design? It obviously references the old 5, but at the same time it has modern details and proportions. Designers can get so drunk on the possibilities of modern manufacturing processes that they overcomplicate things. I reckon this new Renault 5 is simply good design – plain and simple.

MATT SAUNDERS
After years of chasing the Germans, Renault seems to have rediscovered how to set up a chassis to be nicely fluid, without losing much, if anything, in handling competence. It's refreshing.

SPEC ADVICE

As a second car for local journeys, a 40kWh 5 in Iconic trim should be sufficient. Otherwise, badger your dealer to add the heated seat option on Techno trim. Failing that, just go for the long-range Iconic Five car. Do the world a favour and pick a bright colour.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Make a substantial improvement to the energy efficiency at motorway speeds.
- Add the option of standard cruise control.
- Give the driver more control over regenerative braking, with one-pedal and freewheeling modes.

RANKING RIVALS

1 RENAULT 5 COMFORT RANGE ICONIC FIVE

2 MINI COOPER SE CLASSIC

£29,905

★★★★☆

Despite its bespoke electric platform, the second-generation electric Mini is very much a Mini, but electric. This means that it puts style and driving fun above everything else. It's quicker than most rivals, and it's pointy and playful in the corners. Look elsewhere if you're after something spacious with a smooth ride. Its user interface is also divisive. Nevertheless, it's quite efficient, which gives it a competitive range, and a price drop has made it a close match for the Renault. The keen driver's choice.

Motor Separately excited synchronous motor, FWD
Power 215bhp
Torque 243lb ft
Kerb weight 1605kg
0-62mph 6.7sec
Top speed 106mph
Battery 54.2/49.2kWh (total/usable), NMC
Range 244 miles
Economy 4.4mpkWh
Max charge rate 95kW

3 MG 4 EV LONG RANGE SE

£29,495

★★★★☆

The MG 4 is arguably the most compelling car coming out of China. You're initially drawn to its value argument, because it's a size up from the Renault, with a bigger battery, but for the same money. Its rear-drive chassis has a surprising ride and handling balance, and the MG impresses with its cabin space and fast charging. Some of its tech frustrates and it's more of a budget proposition than the Renault and Mini, which is evident in the perceived quality of its interior, but this is a very rounded family hatchback.

Motor Permanent magnet synchronous motor, RWD
Power 201bhp
Torque 184lb ft
Kerb weight 1685kg
0-62mph 7.7sec
Top speed 100mph
Battery 64.0/61.7kWh (total/usable), NMC
Range 281 miles
Economy 3.8mpkWh
Max charge rate 135kW

4 CITROEN E-C3 44KWH MAX

£23,690

★★★★☆

Stellantis's new Smart Car platform will spawn a number of affordable cars with both electric and combustion drivetrains in the coming years, and the Citroën C3 is the first. It's proudly built to a cost but still with the goal of not being compromised or feeling cheap. Like Dacias, it gives you what you'll need and use and makes sure it all works properly and is nice to interact with. The ë-C3 is only slightly cheaper than the Renault, and can't match it for range, but it does offer more interior space.

Motor Permanent magnet synchronous motor, FWD
Power 111bhp
Torque 89lb ft
Kerb weight 1416kg
0-62mph 10.4sec
Top speed 84mph
Battery 44.0/43.7kWh (total/usable), LFP
Range 203 miles
Economy 3.6mpkWh
Max charge rate 100kW

5 FIAT 500E 42KWH LA PRIMA

£30,995

★★★½☆

Fiat's revitalised and electrified icon has been out for a few years, and while it is feeling its age in some respects, it has held up quite well. Good efficiency means it gets creditable range out of its small battery. It's a genuinely small car, which is a boon in town. Meanwhile, it's surprisingly good fun on a twisty road, its tech works well and it's effortlessly stylish in a very Italian way. On raw usability – particularly in terms of range and interior space – it trails the competition, and despite a recent price drop, it's not cheap.

Motor Permanent magnet synchronous motor, FWD
Power 117bhp
Torque 162lb ft
Kerb weight 1365kg
0-62mph 9.0sec
Top speed 91mph
Battery 42.0/37.3kWh (total/est usable), NMC
Range 199 miles
Economy 4.4mpkWh
Max charge rate 85kW

6 VAUXHALL CORSA ELECTRIC 50KWH GS

£31,175

★★★☆☆

You can ignore the sticker price here, because the dealer network is still awash with nearly new 'pre-reg' Corsa Electrics, many at heavily discounted prices (more than £10,000 off in many cases). So if you want a really good-value supermini EV, the Corsa's worth considering. The 50kWh version offers only about 150-160 miles of real-world range and the 134bhp motor isn't the peppiest, but it's broadly comparable with the 5 for space and usability, if not for desirability or dynamism.

Motor Permanent magnet synchronous motor, FWD
Power 134bhp
Torque 151lb ft
Kerb weight 1544kg
0-62mph 8.2sec
Top speed 93mph
Battery 50.0/47.0kWh (total/est usable), NMC
Range 215 miles
Economy 3.8mpkWh
Max charge rate 100kW

VERDICT

Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game

★★★★⯪

The market has been crying out for affordable yet stylish and enjoyable small electric cars. While desirable versions of the Renault 5 still cost more than the piston-powered equivalent, it is a decisive step in the right direction.

It has concept-car-made-real looks inside and out, but doesn't let them compromise user-friendliness. It outclasses all of its rivals with the kind of ride and handling balance that's rarely seen at this end of the market. The 5 manages to be both one of the most comfortable and most engaging small cars – whether electric or petrol.

A five-star verdict eludes it because of the disappointing cruising efficiency. A car of this size should get a very creditable range from 52kWh, but that's only true in town. On long trips, it would need more frequent top-ups than a Mini Cooper SE. Even so, the 5's blend of style, value, driving dynamics and fuss-free tech makes it an obvious class leader.

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ILLYA VERPRAET

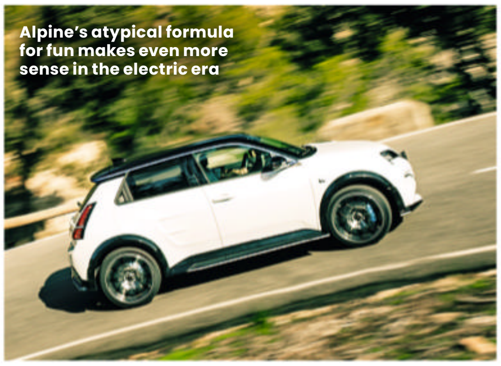
Testing, testing

Effects of upgrading from basic to M are clear and desirable when petrol is involved

Flick through some of our recent road test results (from p67) and you will notice that we've just given 4.5 stars to a sensible electric supermini but awarded the supposedly exciting Porsche Macan Turbo Electric and Maserati Granturismo Folgore only 3.5 stars. Has Autocar lost its sense of fun in old age? Or are all EVs just boring?

Well, neither, I hope. What it demonstrates is that car makers need to fundamentally rethink the way they approach designing their range-topping performance models.

Things used to be more straightforward: faster equals better. Consider a 1990s BMW 3 Series. The one you want is the full-fat 328i or, if you can afford it, the M3, isn't it? The four-cylinder versions are a bit rattly, the lower-rung sixes are still not exactly quick and the M3's engine has that extra bit of motorsport zing.



Alpine's atypical formula for fun makes even more sense in the electric era

"We need to wean ourselves off the cocaine of power"

With a typical fast EV, you get an extra motor for four-wheel drive and a boatload more power. But I don't think those things are especially desirable. Four-wheel drive is great if you need to get up a snowy mountain or need to tow a horsebox out of a field, but with modern traction and stability control systems, it's not that useful on the road. If your car is so powerful that it needs four-wheel drive on the road, you might simply have too much power.

Speaking of which, our '90s M3's engine had a fundamentally different character to the common-or-garden 320i's, whereas in your 600bhp EV there's just more of the same.

And it's not like cheaper models are short of grunt: the basic Macan Electric still has 356bhp, does 0-62mph in 5.7sec and generally has more performance than you can use on the road.

The Macan Turbo Electric in particular just felt like a worse version of the lower-order models. You accept that an M3 is less economical than a 316i, because it has a straight six that revs to 7200rpm and makes a great noise. Getting less range and higher running costs from the more expensive version of an EV is harder to swallow when you don't get anything in return.

The solution is that we need to wean ourselves off the cocaine of horsepower and find our fun elsewhere. Renault has the right idea: the Alpine A290 is a bit quicker than the 5, but because a lot of work went into differentiating its chassis, it's actually more fun, more playful, more engaging.

Same with the Ioniq 5 N: Hyundai turned the comfy, loungy Ioniq 5 into a proper driver's car. This is partly because its chassis feels completely different and partly because Hyundai dared to think outside the box. When an electric motor makes no discernible noise of its own, well, you make it sound however you like. And when there's no physical connection between the two driven axles, the torque split can be almost infinitely variable. The Ioniq 5 N makes use of the possibilities of electric drive to feel completely like its own thing.

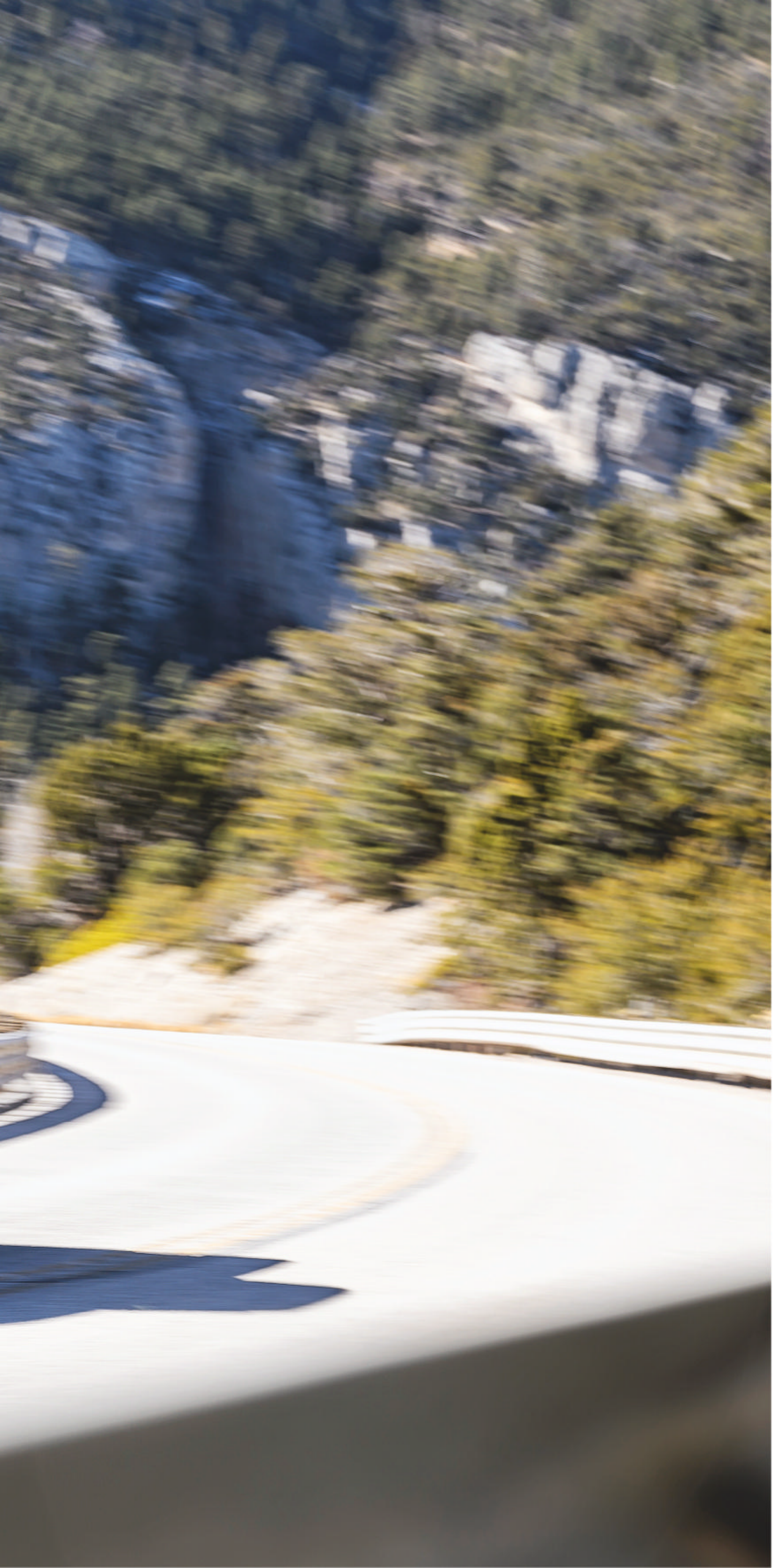
Another development is that EVs are making rear-wheel drive more common again. As it stands, most manufacturers seem too scared by the oversteery, tank-slapping mayhem this could potentially cause to capitalise on the potential for better steering feel and sweeter chassis balance. The best modern traction control is so sophisticated and able to so precisely administer power from an electric motor that I think there's a whole world of chassis balance yet to be explored if engineers can resist smothering it with an additional motor.

More artificial and less visceral than little explosions? Perhaps, but if regulation continues on its current path, we've got another five years to enjoy new combustion engines. Let's savour it – but also use that time to figure out that there's life beyond power.

Move fast and make things

Rivian is a radical EV start-up with a different approach – and it works. **JAMES ATTWOOD** drives its pick-up and hears about its VW Group deal

PHOTOGRAPHY JAMIE LIPMAN



As an American EV start-up, Rivian is routinely – and predictably – compared to Tesla. But even a cursory glance at their respective pick-up trucks indicates the vastly differing approaches of the two firms. While the Tesla Cybertruck is unapologetically brash and wilfully confrontational, the Rivian R1T is infused with genuine warmth and charm. And while Elon Musk's firm has delighted in disrupting the car industry, Rivian's seemingly more conventional approach has attracted investment from the likes of Ford and Volkswagen.

But look closer, at either the R1T or Rivian itself, and both are more radical than they first appear. That's why the Volkswagen Group signed a deal worth up to £4.6 billion to invest in Rivian, including creating a new joint-venture company.

You see, Rivian isn't really a car firm at all: it's a software company. A software company that makes some seriously impressive cars.

"We see ourselves as a tech company that builds sustainable cars," says Wassym Bensaid, Rivian's software chief and co-CEO of the Rivian-Volkswagen joint venture. "We have a lot of respect for Tesla, who disrupted the industry, but we also have respect for traditional auto makers."

Bensaid is clear about what makes Rivian different: "Software is not an afterthought for us. The way we design the car is around software. Everything in the vehicle – from the way it drives to navigation, battery management, thermal management – it's all run by software."

A NEW TYPE OF PICK-UP

Rivian was founded in 2009 by RJ Scaringe and went through various names and funding rounds while it slowly built up expertise. It wasn't always smooth, and the firm has burned through a lot of investment capital, but while most other EV start-ups failed, Rivian succeeded: the R1T was the first full-size US electric pick-up to reach the market. It was launched in 2021, ahead of the Ford F-150 Lightning and when the Cybertruck seemed more the stuff of Musk's dystopian fever dreams than an actual production vehicle.

Still, the R1T that awaits me outside the Rivian Service Center, located in a nondescript industrial district of Las Vegas's drab, sprawling suburbs, looks positively fresh in terms of design. It's softer than most big US trucks, and distinctive oval-shaped headlights, a full-width light bar and a blanked-off front end give it a slightly futuristic feel, but it's recognisably a pick-up.

Parked next to 'my' R1T is an R1S SUV and seeing them together reinforces just how similar they are. They're essentially the same machine: you just choose whether you want a flatbed or a big boot and more space in the back.

The R1T's flatbed features a mechanically closing cover and there's a huge storage tunnel behind the rear seats, which is accessed via hatches on each side of the truck's body. The hatches fold down and can be used as seats, or a step to make it easier to reach into the flatbed. And, of course, there's a really chunky frunk.

The R1T in front of me may look the same as when it was launched, but Rivian made enough changes late last year to label this a second-generation model. There are new built-in-house motors, reworked air suspension and new battery packs. It's offered with two, three or four motors, all providing four-wheel drive. ▸

“It’s very comfortable. Quick too. A three-tonne kerb weight is no match for three electric motors”

◂ Dual-motor models have 526bhp and the quad-motor set-up produces a bonkers 1011bhp, enough to give this three-tonne pick-up a Porsche 911 GT3-beating claimed 0-60mph time of less than 2.5sec.

I’ll be making do with the tri-motor version (two motors on the rear axle, one up front), which has a mere 838bhp. Probably enough. For the record, that’s nearly identical to the tri-motor Tesla Cyberbeast. A range of battery sizes is offered for the various powertrains: this R1T Tri uses a 141.5kWh unit for a range of 371 miles.

Part of the reason Rivian hasn’t altered the styling for this new model is because it’s really the only constant. The firm regularly improves cars already on the roads through over-the-air updates. For example, the second-gen model features a new infotainment interface, which will eventually be rolled out to existing cars.

“The defining feature of our cars is how they improve over time,” says Bensaid. “We have highly engaged owners and they are very vocal in wanting more features. If a month passes by and our customers don’t receive an update, I’ll get messages asking what’s happened.”

Those updates – and much of the work on the second-generation R1T hardware – was based on customer data. Updates have included everything from new locking sounds and a car wash mode to more tangible changes.

“One of the most successful updates we had was to the suspension,” says Bensaid. Real-world testing convinced Rivian’s engineers that the ride wasn’t performing as they had intended, so they reprogrammed how the adjustable air suspension balanced the ride over bumps.

“Customers could not believe we could change that through software,” says Bensaid. “It was mind-boggling. With a traditional car, when you drive it out of the dealership, that’s the ride quality that you have, but we can change suspension through software. That’s the magic we can bring.”

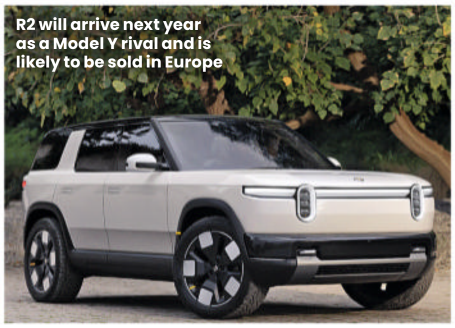
INSIDE THE R1T

So is an R1T magic to drive? I’m keen to find out, but first I need to get into it. Rivian’s press car uses digital guest keys provided through the Rivian app, except it isn’t available in the Apple UK app store. Thankfully, the Rivian Service Center staff trust me with the actual credit card-style key.

There is a Tesla-esque feel to the interior, with minimal physical controls and a big, 15.6in touchscreen, although in Rivian’s case it sits horizontally. There are multifunction toggles on the steering wheel and a row of fixed buttons at the bottom of the screen gives access to essential functions. The interior isn’t as stark as a Tesla’s: there’s a warmth to the materials, especially the ash wood-effect dashboard and deep plaid carpeting that, depending on your view, echoes either a Volkswagen Golf GTI or a 1970s chain hotel.

Overall, it’s light and bright, helped by a panoramic glass roof that features adjustable opacity. The rear seats are a bit upright, but then this is a pick-up and there’s plenty of room, as well as a rear touchscreen that gives access to the ventilation and infotainment controls.

Rivian’s factory is in Normal, Illinois. It has just secured a US government loan to build a second facility near Atlanta, Georgia.



R2 will arrive next year as a Model Y rival and is likely to be sold in Europe

SMALLER SUVs ARE VITAL NEXT STEP

Rivian’s first two passenger models were focused on North America, allowing the firm to expand without the risk of spreading itself too thinly. And while there are still growing pains in terms of profitability, Rivian has established a stable foundation – and its next models are all about growth.

The firm showed concept versions of the smaller R2 and R3 SUVs last year. The production version of the R2, due in 2026, is broadly similar in size to a Tesla Model Y and is tipped to start from around £35,000.

“The R2 is the big moment for us because we’ll get the DNA of the brand – great drive dynamics, a great interior, great design, great software and technology – into a vehicle with a much more accessible price point,” says Wassym Bensaid.

And the R2 and R3 aren’t just about growth in the US. Bensaid calls the R2 “the vehicle that will allow us to expand outside the US”. He won’t be drawn on when a Rivian will go on sale in the UK but says: “Every aspect of how we’re building that car, in form and engineering and every feature, is being done with the mindset we’re bringing it to Europe.”

RIVIAN R1T TRI

Price $102,400 (about £81,000)
Engine Three permanent magnet synchronous electric motors
Power 838bhp
Torque 1103lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 3182kg
0-62mph 2.9sec
Top speed 124mph
Battery 141.5kWh (total)
Range, economy 371 miles, na
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, na
Rivals Ford F-150 Lightning, Tesla Cybertruck Cyberbeast

Still, the experience is dominated by the touchscreen, which is used for everything from the infotainment to the steering wheel adjuster (then done using the steering wheel toggles) and drive modes. It's truly among the slickest systems you'll find, both in terms of functionality and visual splendour, with stylised comic-book-style graphics. There's no Apple CarPlay or Android Auto but it's so good you don't miss them.

Most key features require just a press or two, but there's no skimping on information: the off-road mode page shows off a mind-boggling amount of data. There's fun too: Gear Guard security mode originally introduced a friendly bear to watch over your belongings and he now appears on several other function screens.

"We're extremely intentional in what we put on the screen," says Bensaid. "We want it to be a very intuitive experience, because we know touchscreens can be a barrier. We want our drivers to have fun and we have internal debates about every single pixel that goes on the screen."

DRIVING THE FUTURE OF PICK-UPS

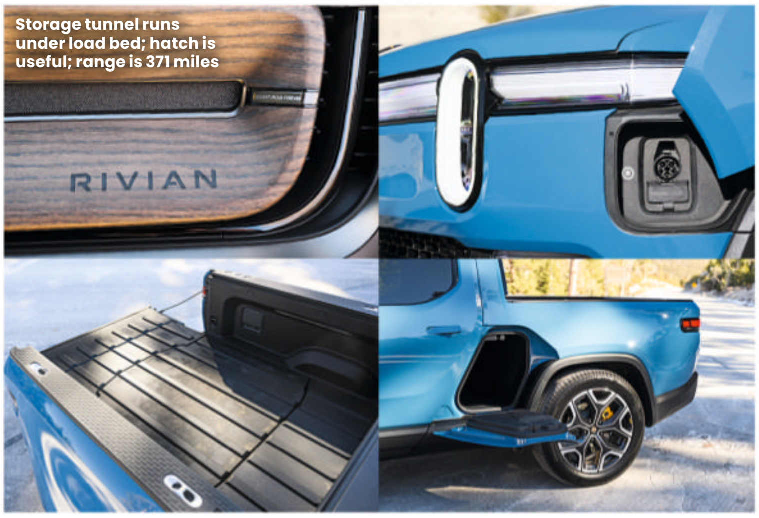
With an R1T for a day, the question is where to head. From the Service Center, I can see the gaudy skyline of the Las Vegas strip a few miles south, but that doesn't feel like the R1T's natural home. Too brash, too showy. Cybertruck territory, basically. So with the Rivian's outdoorsy vibes, I head north-west towards the tranquillity of Nevada's Spring Mountains.

On the urban roads and interstates that I traverse to get there, the R1T is pleasingly amiable, especially because its hefty size isn't an issue in this wide, open space. Like many pick-ups, the high ride height, chunky tyres and raised suspension – not to mention my test car's 22in tyres – mean it's not the most planted of vehicles, but standard air suspension soaks up bumps and it's really very comfortable.

It's predictably quick too: a three-tonne kerb weight is no match for three electric motors.

Once I've escaped the city limits and found a straight and empty road, I have a play with the launch control, egged on by the Gear Guard bear on screen (clearly a bad influence). The novelty of a fast-accelerating EV has long worn off, but there's still amusement in experiencing such astounding pick-up in a pick-up.

But launch control is a distracting party piece. The R1T's core skills are the genuine multi-terrain and towing capability it offers. It's a car for the great outdoors. Once I've escaped the Vegas valley, the road starts rising and winding. Up here, the R1T is no slouch and it's able to power out of hairpins with aplomb. It's fun ▸



Storage tunnel runs under load bed; hatch is useful; range is 371 miles

It's minimalist inside but easy to operate and comfortable on the move

Company's first vans wore Amazon badges but are now Rivian-branded

IT'S NOT JUST SUVS AND PICK-UPS

Rivian's passenger cars may grab the attention, but much of its early growth was fuelled by delivery vans.

In 2019, Rivian secured an agreement to make electric vans for Amazon, a deal that helped its cash flow and upped production at its Illinois facility – even if the vans carried Amazon rather than Rivian badges.

The deal initially allowed for up to 100,000 units, but an exclusivity agreement lapsed after Amazon failed to order a certain number of vans by a certain point. As a result, Rivian has now launched its own-brand Electric Delivery Van to other firms.

It's offered in three sizes, with the smallest 500 model able to be used in Europe, and a variety of batteries and powertrains. Because it was largely designed for use in urban areas as a last-mile delivery vehicle, ranges run from about 120 to 160 miles.

◂ rather than thrilling in corners but you wouldn't really expect a heavy pick-up to offer much more.

It's a cold winter day in Nevada and a bracing wind makes it truly bitter in the mountains. Not ideal conditions for an EV, and on the outbound trip I've used more of the R1T's charge than I expected. But after playing with the regen and drive modes, and learning how best to use the truck's weight, it fares far better on the return leg and I arrive back at the Service Center having averaged around 2mpkWh. Not impressive in isolation but reasonable for this size of vehicle.

THE VOLKSWAGEN TIE-UP

The R1T is an impressive thing. It certainly doesn't feel like the first product from an EV start-up. It's well conceived and well built, with a real maturity to the driving experience and powertrain. I've yet to drive a Cybertruck, but when editor Mark Tisshaw tried one recently, he found himself liking it in spite of the thing. By contrast, the R1T is so endearing that you want to like it. I fear I'd have upset the Gear Guard bear if I didn't.

It echoes Bensaid's comments about Rivian's relationship with its customers. "They now have very different expectations of what they want," he says. "They don't want a traditional car that has an electric powertrain. They want a different type of end-to-end product. That's the big difference between traditional car firms and us."

And that, ironically, is why the Volkswagen Group is so interested – and now invested – in Rivian. Legacy car firms have spent vast sums of money trying to master the art of making software-defined vehicles and they're still struggling. After its own struggles, the VW Group has clearly decided the best way to get that knowledge is to work with a firm that has it.

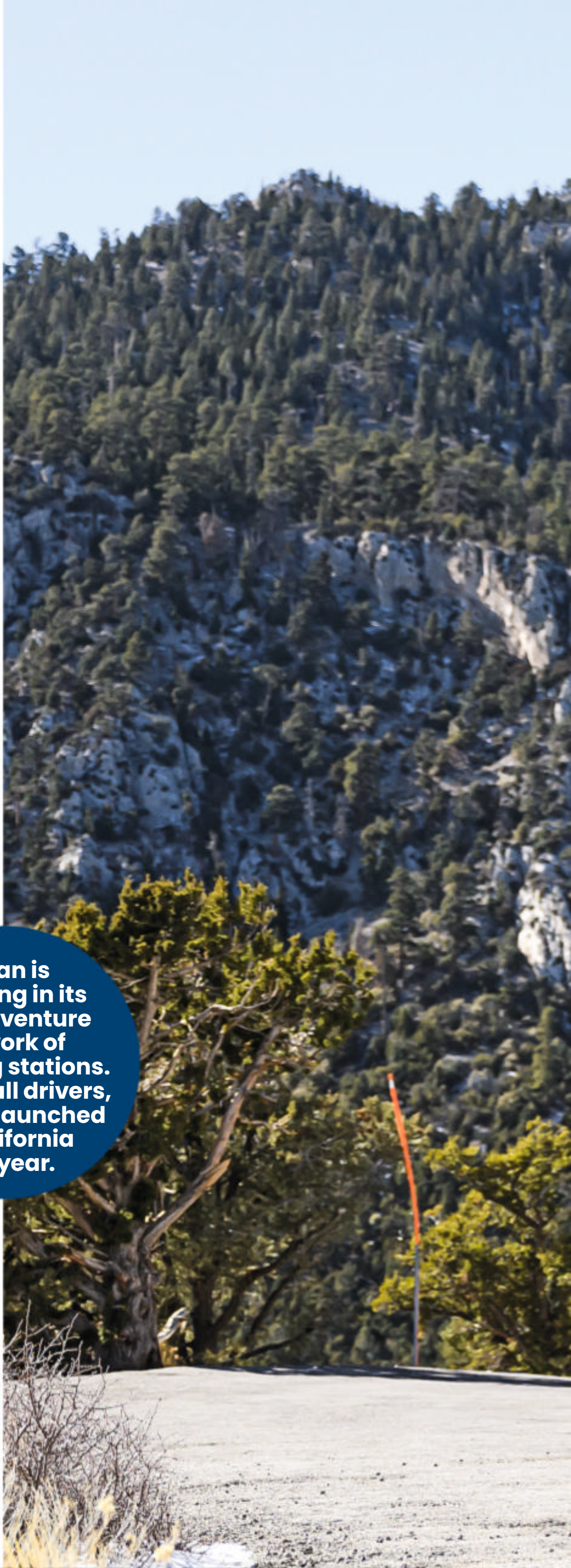
"It's great recognition for everything that the team has achieved," says Bensaid, who performs his role as co-CEO of the new joint venture alongside the Volkswagen Group's Carsten Helbing. And he notes that the deal isn't a one-way street. "We have complementary strengths," says Bensaid. "We're coming with a clean-sheet software stack and electric architecture, and a passionate team that wants to make an impact. The Volkswagen Group brings experience and scale, and a broad portfolio of brands. It's a fantastic opportunity for our engineers to make a much bigger impact."

Details of the joint venture are still being finalised, but it will involve both firms developing vehicles on a new software-based platform, which builds on Rivian's current architecture. The first Volkswagen Group model to use the new software will be the production version of the new ID Every1 in 2027 (see p4).

"We're learning how we work together," says Bensaid. "Something extremely important to us was the willingness of Volkswagen leadership to keep the same agile and nimble culture that Rivian has and to use the joint venture as a change agent to bring that agility and ambitious spirit to the VW Group."

Perhaps, then, while their approaches contrast wildly, Rivian and Tesla are pretty similar after all: both could act as agents of change in a car industry that remains in a state of flux. ◼

Rivian is investing in its own Adventure Network of charging stations. Open to all drivers, the first launched in California last year.



Touchscreen shows Rivian's software nous; roof gives cabin airy feel

Its looks remain constant but the rest is updated over the air frequently

"It doesn't feel like an EV start-up's first product. It's well conceived and well built, with a real maturity"

STABILITY ON SHAKY GROUND

Just as the global car market overcame one long-term challenge in 2024, serious concerns about Europe and electrification grew more acute. JULIAN RENDELL crunches the numbers

The overarching theme of the global car market last year was stabilisation, hopefully signalling the end – finally – of pandemic-induced turmoil and ensuing component supply problems.

The sales figures reveal that there were some clear winners and losers, though.

BYD made further inroads after emerging as a global force in 2023, Toyota continued to dominate, China again bought more cars than the next two biggest markets combined and the US showed Europe how to push on after Covid.

BMW and Mercedes-Benz remained atop the premium market and JLR's remaking of the Land Rover Defender as a brand in its own right delivered a huge sales reward, while Tesla suffered a stutter after years of incredible growth.

Electrification posed problems in Europe, the third-biggest global market, as rigid government sales targets stifled the overall growth trajectory.

The battle to be the biggest electric car maker heated up, too. Although final figures are still not in, analysis firm Jato Dynamics has put Tesla marginally ahead of BYD, despite the ageing Model Y's sales slowing.

"Tesla is a huge success story," says Jato's global automotive analyst Felipe Munoz, "but the competition is fighting back and the model changeover to a new Model Y held sales back."

Meanwhile, Stellantis suffered a horrible decline in the US, stemming from its Jeep brand, but developed a strong position in the European EV market. In strict business terms, investment might have been better focused on profitable new Jeep models for the US.

Join us as we take a deeper dive into the data and see how it stacks up against 2023's results.

EUROPEAN STAGNATION

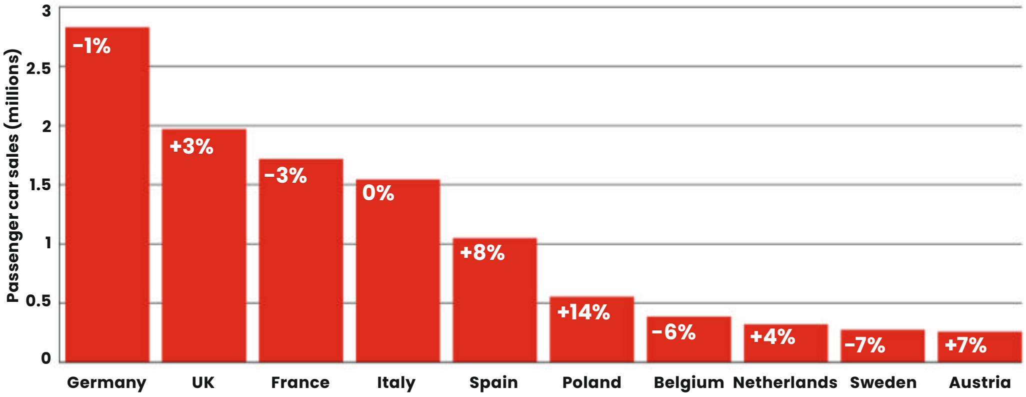
The four biggest car markets in Europe stagnated in 2024, due to poor economic growth, regulatory instability and low consumer confidence. This limited the overall new car market to 12.91 million units, up just 1% on 2023.

The only top-four market to grow sales was the UK, although the boost of 3% was significantly down on the 18% growth of 2023. France's market dropped 3%, while Germany declined 1% and Italy remained static.

Spain, Poland and Austria were bright lights, recording percentage increases of 8%, 14% and 7% respectively, but overall they are small markets.

There was a significant pivot in market demand, too, with EVs down 1% to 1.99 million units, while hybrids rose 21% to 1.53 million.

JATO'S VIEW "The lack of clarity around the transition policy is forcing many drivers to delay their potential purchase of EVs. The big bet on EVs from Europe is not working as expected."



NORMAL SERVICE RESUMES GLOBALLY

Describing global sales in 2024 as 'stable' may feel underwhelming, but after the turmoil of the three Covid years, followed by the mild recovery in 2023, stability is welcome and provides a platform for further growth in 2025.

China maintained its clear position as the number-one market, with a strong 8% rise in sales to 23.6 million, driven by the growth of home-grown brands, which are increasingly challenging foreign manufacturers.

In second place was the US, where a combined total of 16.1 million car and truck sales was the strongest since the pandemic, rising by 3% from the previous year on the back of a strong economy.

Eight out of the top 10 global car markets recorded small positive movements, the biggest coming from Brazil, sufficient to lift it above the UK to number six in the sales chart, on a wave of cheap finance.

India swapped positions with Japan, largely because the latter market fell by 8%, dragged down by a safety testing scandal that halted sales of Daihatsu mini cars.

Europe was affected by the slowing shift to EVs, which are still expensive compared with combustion-powered cars, plus poor economic growth and tough regulation that has raised prices.

JATO'S VIEW "The US was boosted by better financial conditions and deals from car makers reducing their inventory levels. But Europe is moribund and needs market stimulation in 2025."

China	23,567,407	+8%
US	16,091,543	+3%
India	4,835,318	+3%
Japan	4,376,983	-8%
Germany	3,092,372	0%
Brazil	2,481,421	+14%
UK	2,305,690	+3%
France	2,096,858	-2%
Canada	1,857,175	+9%
Italy	1,757,773	0%

Figures include light commercial vehicles

TESLA STILL LEADS THE ELECTRIC PACK

BYD didn't overtake Tesla in 2024, despite the growth of the Chinese firm (+12%) and the slight regression of the American one (-1%).

Tesla was narrowly ahead by 25,000 units, while the Model Y became China's favourite car and the US and Europe's fourth-favourite. The Model 3 defended the number-two slot well, successfully holding off the new challenge of the entry-level Seagull.

How did BYD get so close? Thanks to an extensive line-up that's very popular in China and a global expansion plan that's working well in Brazil, Thailand, Indonesia and the Middle East. BYD's sales growth percentages are remarkable, and as it embarked on its global export drive, its sales outside China grew by a huge 120% to more than 280,000.

The Volkswagen ID 4 remains the only EV from a European brand in the global top 10, although its sales fell by a disappointing 13%.

JATO'S VIEW "European car makers need new EVs and for them to be successful in multiple export markets. New affordably priced models coming in 2025 may deliver that success."

Tesla Model Y
1,164,463
-4%

Tesla Model 3
536,549
+6%

BYD Seagull
466,699
+111%

BYD Yuan Plus (Atto 3)
325,584
-7%

Wuling Hongguang Mini EV
274,057
+16%

EVs LOSE MOMENTUM IN EUROPE

The ongoing debate over EVs in Europe was reflected in last year's sales total, which at 1,985,996 was down marginally on 2023.

This small drop of 23,361 (-1.25%) is the consequence of a lack of clarity about government incentives, the high prices of EVs, infrastructure issues and poor residual values. Even the Tesla Model Y wasn't immune, its sales total down some 32,000 on the previous year.

There was no shortage of new EVs to choose from in 2024. Jato counted an additional 44 models coming to market, taking the total to 187.

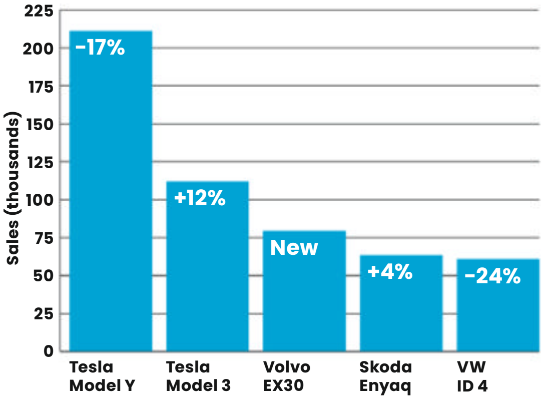
Stellantis overtook the Volkswagen Group in Europe to have 34 EV models on sale, compared with its rival's 19. However, Stellantis struggled to sell this wide array of models: it posted a significant drop of 15% on the Fiat/Abarth 500 and 600 and Jeep Avenger while Opel/Vauxhall EV volumes fell 35%.

Volvo's new EX30 made a decisive entry, going straight into the number-three slot. This year, it may even push the Tesla Model 3 for second.

The Renault Group, an early mover in European EVs alongside its Alliance partner Nissan, enjoyed strong sales from the new Renault Scenic but was penalised by the model change of the China-built Dacia Spring and a 28% drop-off in Renault Megane sales.

In the case of Nissan, the Leaf was down 30%, leaving the Ariya as its best-seller – but competing against the Model Y isn't easy.

JATO'S VIEW "Six new more affordable EVs will hit the market this year. The Renault 5, Citroën ë-C3, BYD Atto 2, BYD Seagull, Fiat Grande Panda and Hyundai Inster should shake the rankings."



TOYOTA REMAINS ON TOP OF THE WORLD

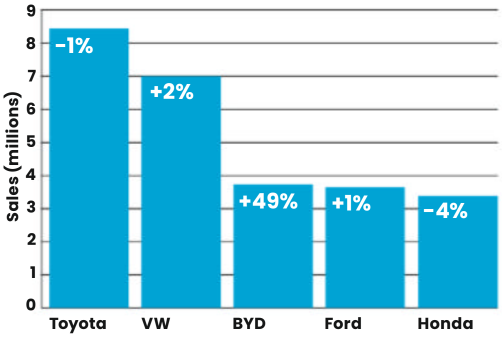
Toyota retained its global best-seller crown in 2024, keeping the Volkswagen Group at bay, but the next three slots are too close to call until sales figures are in for every part of the world.

Reflecting the 'stable' conclusion for the global market, the individual brand rankings stayed pretty much static for 2024, with the exception of BYD, whose export assault yielded a 49% uplift.

Toyota's continuing dominance of global markets is underpinned by the popularity of its hybrid models, its presence in all markets and models tailored to local tastes.

"Toyota's hybrids are popular in the developed world and are becoming the perfect solution in developing economies, where the high prices of EVs deter buyers," says Munoz.

Volkswagen is safe in the number-two spot for the next couple of years, but BYD is a growing threat and the German firm's weakness in the US needs addressing.



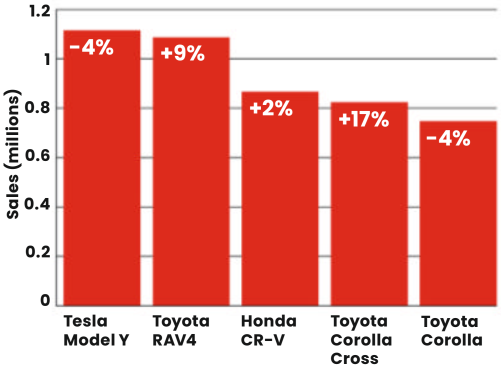
MODEL Y vs RAV4: TOO CLOSE TO CALL

The Tesla Model Y and Toyota RAV4 are neck and neck for the number-one slot in the global best-selling models chart, with the final outcome too close to call.

The deciding factor will be sales in important markets in Africa, Asia and Latin America, for which the definitive numbers have yet to be finalised but will almost certainly favour the RAV4, making that car the favourite.

Currently, the American EV is ahead of the Japanese ICE car by around 49,000 sales. Last year, the difference between the two models was some 100,000 units.

JATO'S VIEW "This battle between the Model Y and RAV4 will intensify in 2025. The updated Model Y will be rolled out in Europe, China and North America, so sales should increase versus 2024. At the same time, Toyota is getting ready to introduce a new generation of the RAV4, which would affect its sales during the year."



All data is preliminary. Data not available from the Middle East, Central Asia, parts of Africa, Latin America, minor European countries, Hong Kong and Pakistan. Jato's figures may vary from those reported by manufacturers due to different accounting methods.

Q&A FELIPE MUNOZ, JATO ANALYST

What is the key takeaway from last year's car market?
"Global markets stabilised in 2024. Some grew and some declined, balancing the overall position. Economic conditions were generally steady, but large issues like electrification held back growth."

Hybrids enjoyed a significant global sales bounce. Why?
"The rest of the world isn't rushing into electrification as Europe is. Many markets in Asia, Latin America and the US see hybrid powertrains as fuel-efficient, clean technologies of the future, especially if they didn't adopt diesels."

Where do the key global markets stand in 2025?
"China is very strong and will continue to grow. The contrast between the US and Europe is stark: both suffered during the pandemic, but the US has recovered much faster. Europe needs to find a growth strategy."

Anything specific to watch for in global EV sales in 2025?
"We should pay attention to BYD. It's becoming popular in many markets and its prices are still very competitive. The Seagull is a model to watch in 2025."

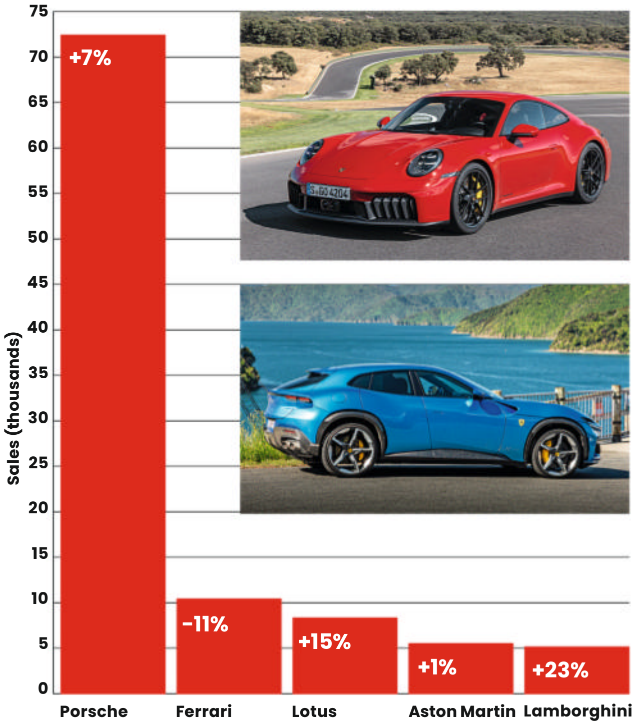
911 AND PUROSANGUE FUEL PORSCHE AND FERRARI

Ferrari and Porsche cemented their leadership in the supercar and super-SUV segments.

The bulk of Ferrari's sales came from the 296, Roma and 812, but the Purosangue had a strong year, scoring more than 2100 sales for an 18% market share.

"Ferrari keeps growing, thanks to the Purosangue and also because its cars maintain desirability," says Munoz. "While other segments are experiencing new competition from Chinese brands, Ferrari is free from that challenge."

Porsche, of course, remains in its own highly successful segment, thanks to the perennial popularity of the 911. After 47,000 sales in 2023, this diverse model family found even more buyers in 2024, nudging towards 50,000.

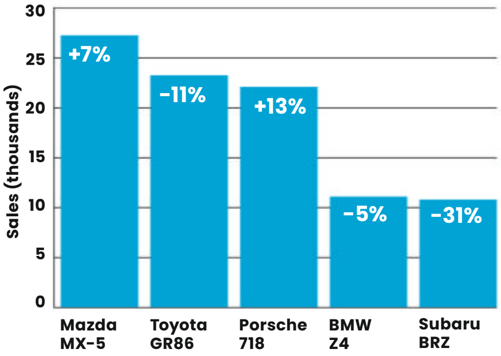


GREAT YEAR FOR AFFORDABLE FUN

Mazda, Toyota and Porsche keep the affordable sports car format alive, and the market-leading MX-5 and 718 Boxster/Cayman had strong years, even though the GR86 fell back slightly.

The ND generation of the MX-5 is selling very well, considering that it's celebrating a decade on sale in 2025.

The 718 range increased sales, too. In fact, six of the market's 12 models did.



RENEWED 'STANG SMOKES RIVALS

It was the Ford Mustang all the way in the two-door segment for 2024, as the rejuvenated pony car grabbed the number-one spot from the BMW 4 Series. It seems the new BMW 2 Series may have grabbed sales from its bigger brother.

However, the new Mercedes-Benz CLE was the standout performer, succeeding in concentrating the German brand's coupé and cabriolet sales into a single model range.

Ford Mustang
56,140
-5%

BMW 4 Series
47,242
-22%

Mercedes-Benz CLE
43,993
New

BMW 2 Series
38,708
+25%

Dodge Challenger
29,167
-40%

BIDENOMICS BOOM BENEFITS MANY BUT NOT ALL

Last year in the US was a tale of two trends: the overall market enjoyed a 3% increase, putting Europe's stagnant market into the shade, while the Ford F-150 pick-up truck lost its 15-year lead as the best-selling model.

The Toyota RAV4 usurped the F-Series by just under 15,000 units when commercial and heavy-duty variants are stripped out of the analysis. The last time the F-150 lost its crown was in 2009, when the Toyota Camry outsold it.

Overall, the US market was buoyant with 16.09 million cars and light trucks sold, up by 3% and the highest total since the pandemic.

Part of the growth was due to better than expected economic conditions, such as lower interest rates, moderate inflation and less unemployment.

The 'big two' from Detroit claimed 30% of the market. That increases to 34% when you add in EV leader Tesla. General Motors remained ahead of Toyota and Ford, while fourth went to the Hyundai Motor Group.

The big shock was Stellantis losing fifth position to Honda. Back in the day, the Chrysler Group was number three.

JATO'S VIEW "The solid overall market performance hides the awful collapse of Jeep sales – a desperate situation for Stellantis. Jeep dropped out of the top 10 brands and was outsold by Subaru, Tesla and GMC."

Toyota RAV4
475,193
+9%

Ford F-150
460,915
-5%

Honda CR-V
402,791
+11%

Tesla Model Y
372,613
-3%

Chevrolet Silverado 1500
344,022
-2%

LAND ROVER UP, JAGUAR DOWN

A dramatic year for the UK's only major car maker was dominated by the kerfuffle surrounding Jaguar's rebranding as a DEI-progressive maker of super-luxury electric cars.

This PR offensive masked two key sales metrics: the loss of 58,000 sales from Jaguar as it entered 2025 with no cars to sell and a hugely successful 2024 for Land Rover and Range Rover, which sold some 225,000 cars with sticker prices averaging around £100,000 – at least £22.5 billion worth of cars spread over just three models.

The new Land Rover Defender now qualifies as one of the most successful British car launches ever, nearly 96,000 having been sold in 2024. Its predecessor was a 25,000-per-year model.

The end of ICE car sales for Jaguar was poignant. Despite three decades of investment, it finished 2024 only marginally up on the 42,000 cars built in 1989, when Ford took over.

Looking forward, JLR could do with upping the Land Rover Discovery Sport's game. It sold a solid 15% more in 2024 than in 2023 but remains a minor player in its segment.

JATO'S VIEW "The controversy over the advertising campaign from Jaguar and its repositioning is exaggerated. The brand needs to absolutely break with its immediate past if it wants to survive."

JLR sales by region

US	China	UK	Italy	Germany
90,792	71,010	67,199	12,488	12,280
+25%	-14%	+14%	0%	-12%

PREMIUM STALWARTS HOLD FIRM

There were few changes in the global premium rankings, as BMW finished just ahead of Mercedes and Audi, while Chinese brands struggled to make any impact. BMW was top dog thanks to strong-selling SUVs and electric cars. The X1, X3 and X5 featured in its top five, garnering 756,000 sales between them, whereas Audi and Mercedes had two SUVs each in their top fives. Audi started well with the Q8 E-tron but hasn't been able to maintain growth after the introduction of the Q4 E-tron. Will the Q6 E-tron change that once the German firm discontinues its largest electric SUV model?

JATO'S VIEW "Lexus and Volvo continue to grow steadily but slowly. Their respective bets on hybrids and plug-in hybrids and electric cars are paying off, although not at the speed expected."

BMW
2,153,770
-2%

Mercedes-Benz
2,106,287
-2%

Audi
1,660,110
-9%

Lexus
793,687
+4%

Volvo
747,674
+9%

Thanks to Jato Dynamics (jato.com) and Felipe Munoz (@carindustryanalysis)

Lewis sticks it all on *red*

But is it really such a gamble for Hamilton to join Ferrari this late in his career? As Formula 1 prepares for a fresh and possibly tight season, **DAMIEN SMITH** considers the odds

Ferrari will look to benefit from Hamilton's wealth of experience both on and off the track

Race fans always savour the sweet sense of anticipation at this time of year, with everything all ahead of us. But perhaps there's an extra shot of expectation this time around because, on paper and before a wheel has turned in anger, we might just be in for the most open and competitive Formula 1 season in more than a decade.

Genuinely. Based on form last year and heading into the final season of a fully mature ruleset, there's every reason to be optimistic that at least eight drivers from four teams could be in with a shout at winning races – and half a dozen of them will be backing themselves to challenge for the world championship.

So, Max Verstappen to make it five in a row at Red Bull? He's driving for what ended up officially as the third-best team in 2024 after its alarming mid-season fall from grace and four-month win drought. Was it really a coincidence the decline occurred as technical chief Adrian Newey uncoupled himself for an eventual move to Aston Martin? In Red Bull's last season with Honda power, questions linger about whether this is an empire in decline or technical strength in depth can reverse the narrative.

McLaren won its first constructors' title in 26 years last term, so will Lando Norris now step up for the drivers' crown after his impressive 2024 breakthrough? Team-mate Oscar Piastri might well have something to say about that if he can qualify more consistently. Then there's George Russell, incontrovertibly and for the first time team leader at Mercedes-AMG. What about the guy at Ferrari who so many consider to be the fastest of all over one lap, Charles Leclerc? And then there's his team-mate – his new team-mate. The one all eyes will be on when the clock ticks down to first practice in Australia.

Sir Lewis Hamilton is a Ferrari driver. Seven times a world champion, 105 times a grand prix winner, all achieved with Mercedes power. Now, having just turned 40, he has taken a leap of faith to join an overseas team for the first time – and the most illustrious of them all. Facing Leclerc, 13 years younger and in the prime of his life. Plus the voracious Italian media. Not to mention the rabid tifosi, who turned out in thousands to witness his first laps of Fiorano in January.

Of course, there are millions of reasons why Hamilton has signed for Ferrari – 100 million per year, if you believe some reports. But the pressure is off the scale. Still, he can handle it. And the prize sits there, looking right at him: a record eighth world title. Some believe by moral rights it's his already, that a race director breaking the FIA's own rules on a whim amounted to night-time robbery back in 2021. That sense of injustice still fuels Hamilton, and his chance of gaining retribution looked increasingly like a long shot if he stayed at Mercedes, after three seasons of mostly frustrating toil under these aerodynamic regulations.

But why Ferrari? Well, first, because it's Ferrari. Few can resist Maranello, even 37 years after Enzo's death. Yes, there's the money. But there's also the prestige, the challenge, that old red magic. We can take it as read, too, that Hamilton is fully pumped for what he faces.

He was convinced by his old Formula 3 and GP2 boss Frédéric Vasseur, for the past two ▸

Leclerc is surely too talented to play second fiddle to his new team-mate

GETTY IMAGES

"The best come alive when they know they have a chance. If that happens, 2025 could be spectacular"

◂ years the good-humoured, disarmingly effective team principal at Ferrari. The Frenchman has quietly rubbed away at Ferrari's crusty old blame culture, reduced the chaos and created a sense of methodical calm last seen during Ross Brawn's watch back in the Michael Schumacher years.

For a man with a record 104 pole positions, it's strange to suggest that Hamilton has lost his qualifying edge. But in their last year together, Russell comprehensively outperformed him on Saturdays. There was little wrong with most of Hamilton's race performances, though, even at a team he knew he was leaving (see Silverstone, Las Vegas and the last one in Abu Dhabi). Yes, he can still conjure at least a portion of the old magic, even in this generation of F1 car, which his driving style has never quite gelled with.

But will it be enough? Yes – if Vasseur delivers on his part of the bargain, Hamilton unlocks what he needs from the new car and gets the slightest sniff of that eighth title. The best come alive when they know they have a chance. If that occurs, what happens next could be spectacular.

However it turns out, you're not going to want to miss this. For the first time in a long while, we can't take our eyes off F1.

Norris and Russell will fancy their chances of dethroning Verstappen

This is the fourth and final year of the current car formula

2025 CALENDAR

1	16 March	Melbourne, Australia
2	23 March	Shanghai, China
3	6 April	Suzuka, Japan
4	13 April	Sakhir, Bahrain
5	20 April	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
6	4 May	Miami, Florida, US
7	18 May	Imola, Italy
8	25 May	Monte Carlo, Monaco
9	1 June	Barcelona, Spain
10	15 June	Montreal, Canada
11	29 June	Spielberg, Austria
12	6 July	Silverstone, UK
13	27 July	Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium
14	3 August	Mogyoród, Hungary
15	31 August	Zandvoort, Netherlands
16	7 September	Monza, Italy
17	21 September	Baku, Azerbaijan
18	5 October	Marina Bay, Singapore
19	19 October	Austin, Texas, US
20	26 October	Mexico City, Mexico
21	9 November	São Paulo, Brazil
22	22 November	Las Vegas, Nevada, US
23	30 November	Lusail, Qatar
24	7 December	Yas Marina, Abu Dhabi, UAE

PAST CHAMPIONS WHO GAMBLED ON FERRARI

Precedence doesn't bode too well for Lewis Hamilton when it comes to world champions who move to Ferrari and try to do it all again.

Alain Prost, three times a champion with McLaren, was driven away by exhausting toxicity with Honda favourite Ayrton Senna. He was a dirty professional foul away from gaining revenge in 1990. The next year, he was sacked for labelling his Ferrari a "truck".

Michael Schumacher left Benetton on a title hat-trick in 1996. He famously then won five more consecutive titles in red, but it took him five years to bag the first. Hamilton doesn't have that long.

Fernando Alonso, twice a champion with Renault, won first time out when he pitched up at Ferrari in 2010. He was so unlucky to lose out on the title that year and starred again against a faster Red Bull in 2012. An angry divorce followed at the end of 2014.

Sebastian Vettel had his moments in red but never quite matched the consistent levels he had achieved in his four title years at Red Bull. The arrival of Charles Leclerc hammered the nail after six deflating years.

THE ROOKIES

It has been labelled a 'generational change' as half a dozen new faces join the grid this year.

ANDREA KIMI ANTONELLI (18)

There's huge hype over the Italian teen who replaces Lewis Hamilton (no less) at Mercedes. He will have a period of grace, but this is F1, so not much. Hamilton's remarkable rookie year with McLaren way back in 2007 is the ultimate benchmark. If Mercedes delivers a winning car (no guarantee on that), might Antonelli give George Russell a new problem?

GABRIEL BORTOLETO (20)

Brazilian who beat Isack Hadjar to the F2 title to earn his graduation gets a plum chance to be a part of Audi's F1 story from the start.

A protégé of Fernando Alonso, he has a good yardstick in ultra-experienced Nico Hülkenberg and, in a team that has much to fix after a terrible 2024, can learn without the spotlight glare that other rookies can't avoid.

JACK DOOHAN (22)

How long will the son of five-time 1990s MotoGP king Mick Doohan get at Alpine? After just one start in Abu Dhabi at the end of 2024, team advisor Flavio Briatore has already heaped pressure on the Aussie – and Franco Colapinto, who was surprisingly good in his part-season for Williams last season, waits in the shadows as Alpine's new reserve driver. Hardly the best way to prepare a rookie for the most daunting challenge of his life.

ISACK HADJAR (20)

French-Algerian F2 graduate is the latest Red Bull junior to face scrutiny in the secondary Racing Bulls team. Comparing well to Yuki Tsunoda, who is heading into his fifth season at Faenza, is the minimum requirement if Hadjar has any hope of one day progressing to the A-team. He has made it to the top without winning a championship in karts or on the junior single-seater ladder.

LIAM LAWSON (23)

New Zealander already has 11 starts under his belt with RB and now steps up to Red Bull to replace the underwhelming Sergio Pérez. The company's forthright advisor Helmut Marko has made it clear in public that Lawson should not expect to take on Max Verstappen (there's a boost for him!), but he has a pleasing edge in his attitude. He didn't put away Yuki Tsunoda when he came in for Daniel Ricciardo mid-season in 2024, though, and the Japanese has every reason to be miffed at being overlooked. Is Lawson good enough to warrant a Red Bull?

OLIVER BEARMAN (19)

Made a stunning F1 debut for Ferrari as a late substitute for an ill Carlos Sainz in Jeddah last year, finishing seventh. Was rewarded with a full-time drive at Ferrari-powered Haas. Then became the first driver to score points for different teams in his first two F1 starts with another super-sub appearance, this time for Kevin Magnussen, in Baku. He now has that Haas seat full time and will ignore any talk that he will be Ferrari's next British F1 driver after Hamilton – first, the job in hand. But at a team flourishing under new principal Ayao Komatsu, what a chance.

WHAT'S NEW?

Adrian Newey has now officially arrived at underachieving Aston Martin. F1's greatest designer has a brief centred on the team's 2026 car, built to new rules, but what difference can he make in the short term? Fernando Alonso, 44 in July, craves a positive answer to that.

After a lack of driver changes across the grid between 2023 and 2024, six rookies are joining this time (see above).

Carlos Sainz steps down a grid slot or three. Ousted by Lewis Hamilton's arrival at Ferrari, the four-time grand prix winner has ended up at Williams (ninth out of 10 teams last year).

Esteban Ocon will most likely be thinking of his move from Alpine to Haas as a step sideways, rather than a demotion. The American team finished just seven points down on the Renault works squad last term, so they exist in the same midfield space.

Former Red Bull sporting director Jonathan Wheatley is a team principal for the first time. He has his work cut out at Sauber to prepare for its transfiguration into Audi next year. Veteran Nico Hülkenberg has also transferred, from Haas to the team he raced for back in 2013.

Another year, another new name for Red Bull's second team. Dubbed RB last time, now they're the Racing Bulls – or, to be precise, the Visa Cash App Racing Bulls. Owning two teams remains a bone of contention. A sale may be best all round.

GETTY IMAGES / RED BULL CONTENT POOL

LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

THE CODFATHER
FISH & CHIPS
KY24 RWU

"What makes so many buyers pay extra to have it over the Golf?"

FIRST REPORT

VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN

What are the secrets to this SUV's success? It's high time we found out

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To find out if the new-generation Tiguan maintains the appeal of Volkswagen's best-seller

Do you believe in real-life NPCs? Sorry, to explain: there's an only semi-joking theory online that 'non-player characters', which simply and unconsciously follow a coded set pattern, have escaped the confines of video games. And I do reckon that a lot of evidence can be gathered to back up the theory – not least from British roads.

The Tiguan has been the best-selling Volkswagen model globally since 2019, shifting many millions of them in that time. Indeed, I started seeing third-generation examples everywhere mere months after it went on sale. But I've yet to meet a car lover who can convincingly explain why, making me wonder if it's NPCs buying all these SUVs. But what is it about this particular one that inspires such excitement in so many non-enthusiasts that they gladly pay extra to have it over that legendary all-rounder, the Golf? Looks? Handling? Performance? Practicality? None of those aspects seems much better to me on paper. If anything, on first impression, they all seem to be slightly worse (and actually, to be brutally honest, I think this Tiguan looks less appealing than the previous one). And my road tester colleagues adjudged it to be competitive with its direct rivals but no better than that. So perhaps we really can blame the whim of whoever coded this game we call life? Yes, this demands a thorough investigation.

My new Tiguan is specified in sporty R-Line trim. That would have worried me, given that you can always expect bigger wheels (20in in this case and curiously named after the city of Leeds) to hamper a car's ride comfort, but thankfully the optional Dynamic Driving Package has been fitted here too, including Dynamic Chassis Control Pro, so I can soften the damping to counteract that at least somewhat.

That pack also includes Dynamic Steering, which means the gearing changes depending on the driving scenario, again in an effort to allow this prosaic family SUV to wear its R outfit a bit more comfortably. There is a Vehicle Dynamics Manager too – not new from Volkswagen but new to the Tiguan, controlling elements of the damping and the electronic differential locks.

The powertrain, however, is the entry-level option: Volkswagen's routine 1.5-litre four-cylinder turbo petrol engine with a mild-hybrid system and a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox, promising 148bhp and 43.2mpg combined – reasonable, I suppose, although a 9.1sec 0-62mph time does seem quite long for an R-badged car.

SECOND OPINION

There is much to like about the roomy, well-appointed and versatile Tiguan. That said, the engine feels a bit undersized and the gearbox isn't that intuitive. The infotainment screen has taken a step in the right direction, but considering the distinct lack of physical controls, I wonder how Kris will find it to live with day to day. **SP**

The proper Tiguan R didn't survive the generation changeover, but you can still get a very healthy 261bhp in the four-wheel-drive 2.0 TSI, if you want bite as well as bark. That seems logical to me, but then it does cost £8000 more, and both Tiguans will just get stuck in the same rush-hour queues

The user interface seems better than it was. But is it as good as it ought to be?

Warmed-up Tiguan has 20in wheels but some ride-friendly features too

anyway. There's also, unusually and commendably, still a diesel offered in the Tiguan range – a 2.0-litre four – as well as two company car tax-friendly plug-in hybrids.

Like everyone else at Autocar, and indeed many customers, I was, shall we say, not a fan of the new dashboard interface that the Volkswagen Group began introducing with the electric ID 3 in 2019. Both the Mk8 Golf and its Seat Leon sibling drove me mad at their 2020 launches with seriously glitchy software, a dearth of buttons and touch-sensitive 'sliders' for controlling the internal temperature. Thankfully, although that basic design persists in the Tiguan, I've so far not had any trouble with the ones and zeroes, and the sliders are at least backlit at night. There are proper buttons on the steering wheel too, rather than those infuriating kind-of-buttons in the ID 3 and Golf – a relief for anyone who ever wants to skip a song.

As standard, the Tiguan's touchscreen measures 12.9in across, but here it has been expanded to a full 15.0in by the £1130 Infotainment Pack Plus – which also includes a head-up display to supplement the usual 10.3in digital instrumentation display. My preference would be a small, dial-controlled screen, but if you're going to make me lean forward and tap, then the bigger the better, really.

So, are all those Tiguan buyers really unthinkingly following a set coded pattern, or am I just afflicted with a bad case of cynicism and main character syndrome? A journey of discovery, whether self- or otherwise, starts here.

KRIS CULMER

TEST DATA

VOLKSWAGEN TIGUAN 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-LINE

Price new £40,275 **Price as tested** £48,760 **Options** Black Styling Pack £1255, Comfort Pack £1140, Infotainment Pack Plus £1130, towbar £1095, Dynamic Driving Package £1025, Persimmon Red metallic paint £810, Driver Assistance Pack £975, IQ Light HD matrix headlights £595, Winter Pack £460 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 43.2mpg (WLTP)

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
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CLE Cabriolet came off the bench for our crocked coupé and drew instant plaudits

MERCEDES-AMG CLE 53

With some late-winter sun forecast, we had to find a way to go topless

MILEAGE 3111
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To generate a progress report on the evolution of the old-school Merc coupé

Convertibles are an increasingly rare breed in new car showrooms. The era of a convertible version of almost everything (Nissan Micra, Peugeot 206, Vauxhall Astra…) is thankfully long behind us, giving the drop-tops that remain more of a special feel and sense of occasion that this breed of car deserves. And proper soft-tops at that, as the retractable hard top thankfully seems to have largely been consigned to history too.

Even premium car makers like Mercedes have cut their convertible ranges. There's only the CLE Cabriolet and SL Roadster if you want a soft-top Merc, and given the supercar brief of the latter, if you want a more traditional Mercedes convertible, the CLE is all there is.

While the AMG CLE 53 was off the road for a few days having its wheels sorted after road tester Illya Verpraet fell out with a pothole, Mercedes sent us a CLE 450 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus Cabriolet (rolls off the tongue) to try. The sun even came out for some winter roof-down miles, that most British of pastimes. So what if it's only two degrees outside? I need my vitamin D.

Like the CLE coupé, the cabriolet is beautifully designed and proportioned. It's so elegant, a real classy and classical Merc. The AMG CLE 53 has been turning as many heads as a supercar would, and nods of approval follow you around in the cabriolet too. It has serious kerb appeal, even if the red roof and tan interior combination isn't quite one I'd go for.

I've been hugely impressed with the refinement levels in the CLE Cabriolet, the 3.0-litre straight-six engine feeling wonderfully understressed. Even with the roof down, it's a quiet cabin. The seats are huge and incredibly supportive; blinding heated seats too – a must in a soft-top in Britain.

It does feel its size and weight over bumps in the road, yet this is more a trade-off for the roof-down poseur appeal than it is a compromise. You never feel like you're in a dynamically inferior product.

The boot is quite fiddly: it's enormous but it doubles as storage for the roof when folded away. There's an almost invisible dividing line in the boot that you need to work out where not to push any luggage behind. The theatre of reaching for the retractable roof button inside can be interrupted by a 'computer says no' moment.

Less is more when it comes to coupés and convertibles if they are to retain their special feeling, and for Mercedes to go all in on the CLE at the expense of everything else achieves that. These are feelgood cars. Soon, there will be a convertible version of the AMG CLE 53. Now that will be one to try…

MARK TISSHAW

TEST DATA

MERCEDES-AMG CLE 53 4MATIC+ COUPE NIGHT EDITION PREMIUM PLUS

Price new £78,825 **Price as tested** £81,445 **Faults** None **Expenses** New tyres £322.67 **Economy** 28.0mpg **Last seen** 12.2.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
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SKODA SUPERB ESTATE

How the Czechs solved car interior designers' big modern conundrum

MILEAGE 2691
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see whether this big new estate really is a flawless family hauler

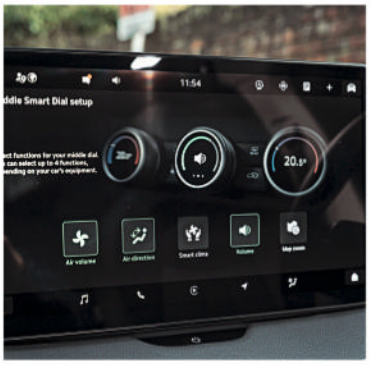
I'm running a Skoda on the Autocar fleet, and that apparently means I'm contractually obliged to discuss its Simply Clever features. You know what I'm on about: those not-so-secret features designed to make life easier. Umbrellas in doors, ice scraper in the fuel cap, parking ticket clip on the windscreen etc.

The ice scraper has helped me on a cold morning, I've clipped things to the windscreen and the umbrellas have saved me from getting wet. Although my most notable discovery is that the new Volkswagen Passat is so closely related to the Superb (development of the two was led by Skoda) that it also gets them. Is that a first for a Volkswagen? I think it might be.

In summary, then: Simply Clever features are present and correct here and as simple and clever as ever. But most Skoda fans probably know that already. So that's mostly all I have to say about them.

Besides, it's other elements of the Superb that I've come to marvel at for simplicity and cleverness. So let's talk Skoda's Smart Dials. Yes, strap yourself in for a thriller.

These three dials are at the bottom of the dashboard, and each controls a range of heating, comfort and infotainment features. They're cleverly multifunctional: pressing a dial changes what it controls.


11:54
ddle Smart Dial setup
ect functions for your middle dial.
can select up to 4 functions,
ending on your car's equipment.
20.5°
Air volume
Air direction
Smart clima
Volume
Map zoom

The dials on the left and right cycle through controls for the cabin temperature and the seat heating and cooling for their respective sides of the car (if you hold down the driver-side dial when on the heating mode, it syncs the vent temperatures). The central dial can be programmed for up to four functions, including the direction of the air vents, infotainment volume, driving modes and map zoom.

Each dial contains a little digital display showing you what operation is selected at that moment.

And, frankly, they're brilliant. They're clear, easy to find when you're driving and pleasingly tactile: they've got a nice feel and click neatly when you turn them.

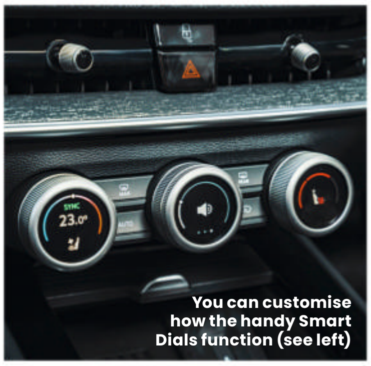
Best of all, in an era when physical controls are under threat as more and more functions are operated via touchscreens, the Smart Dials feel like a really neat solution. One reason car designers have cited for putting controls on touchscreens is that modern cars now have hundreds more functions than they used to, and if each of those functions had a physical control, they would end up with a dashboard so full of buttons and dials that it would look like a plane cockpit. Frankly, I would be all for that, but I can understand the argument against. Then again, that argument is rendered somewhat moot by the use of physical multifunction controls.

Here are physical controls that combine to control up to 10 separate functions in a way that's really easy and intuitive. There's no second guessing about which sub-menu you need and none of the uncertainty that comes from not knowing if you've actually pressed the right bit of the screen. The Smart Dials are a usability delight, and truly simply clever.

Sadly for me, this could be the last time for a while I get to wax lyrical about such features, because I'm about to wave goodbye to the Superb. It's not actually leaving the Autocar fleet yet, but since we're running it because our road testers bestowed an ultra-rare five-star verdict upon it, they've insisted that they should be treated to the keys for a few months.

Given the mileages they rack up, frankly they will get more use out of the Superb's amazing long-haul capabilities than I will, so I've very reluctantly agreed to hand the car over. And I will be intrigued to see what more they learn about it. One confident prediction, though: they will love the Smart Dials.

JAMES ATTWOOD



You can customise how the handy Smart Dials function (see left)

LOVE IT

STEERING WHEEL DIALS
None of those dodgy VW Group haptic controls on the Superb's wheel. Instead, more delightful physical buttons and dials.

LOATHE IT

TOUCHSCREEN
Well, I don't loathe it, but despite the majesty of the Smart Dials, I do still have to use the screen for things like Apple CarPlay. It is at least crisp and handily placed.

TEST DATA

SKODA SUPERB 2.0 TDI SE L ESTATE
Price new £39,705 **Price as tested** £41,675 **Expenses** None **Faults** None **Economy** 54.6mpg **Last seen** 5.3.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
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Attwood's taken the Superb here and there; the road testers will now take it everywhere

AUDI A3 SPORTBACK

Does it matter if this old-tech car is showing its age?

MILEAGE 2321
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see whether a facelift has succeeded in keeping this ICE hatchback relevant

When we welcomed this car to the Autocar fleet, road test editor Matt Saunders wrote: "I'll be keen to find out if Rachel thinks an A3 S Line diesel still feels sufficiently '2024' or like a car ready for retirement."

When I first stepped into the A3, having come from a Lexus LBX, an all-new hybrid, the experience did feel very analogue. Not in a negative way but a notable way nonetheless.

Inside, there's a modestly sized touchscreen running familiar Volkswagen Group software, plus lots of buttons, and they're all properly tactile – none of this haptic hoo-ha. The seats are adjusted using a simple handle, which I've always thought just as effective as the electronic alternative anyway. And then there's the inability to open the doors without using the key fob.

That's the worst of it for me: when carrying various bags and possibly a tantrum-throwing four-year-old, I don't want to have to press the button on a key that is attached to my hand but hidden among all the other stuff. To have that functionality on the A3, you need to pay for the super-shiny Advanced Tech Pack at a cost of £4390…

Would an absence of buttons on the side of your seat bother you?

LOVE IT

PURE VIBES

I'm still enjoying the Sonos speakers, which deliver excellent sound quality.

LOATHE IT

MANUAL LOCKING

I'm struggling to fill this space, which is a good sign. That lack of keyless entry is a bugbear, though.

As I discussed in my 5 February report, diesel powertrains do feel somewhat anachronistic now. Still, having adapted to the lag in torque not found in electrified cars, it has quickly become familiar, and this 2.0-litre four-cylinder engine with 148bhp is perfectly decent.

When I took a very slow journey from west to east London on a Saturday afternoon, it was noisy, but diesels aren't made for that sort of job, and it didn't feel unforgiving.

As with everything, time (mostly) normalises experiences: after a few months in the A3, I can hardly remember feeling that it was analogue in the first place (thank heavens for my notebook).

But this car is getting old now: it was launched in 2020 and facelifted in 2024. As with practically every car maker out there, Audi has focused its efforts on accelerating its EV development and just left its combustion-engined cars ticking over with a nip and tuck occasionally. That seems savvy from a business perspective: there's only so much money to go round and you can still appeal to those who don't want EVs or hardly have the option in some markets.

Despite some of its ageing traits, there's plenty to commend the A3. The District Green paint (which I incorrectly called Distinct Green before; thanks to reader Richard for pointing it out) feels modern and the white and black badge detailing of S Line trim looks similarly on-trend and far better than chrome.

All the legally required ADAS functions can be jarring but less so than in some rivals. I have the ability to charge my phone, use Apple CarPlay for sat-nav and more, listen to the radio, heat my bum on a cold day and get from A to B in a comfortable, usable space. What more could I need?

There's no doubt that this A3 feels long in the tooth in a world of brand-new EVs and space-age interiors. Comparison is everything. But during my time with it so far, this car feels as up to date as any needs to be – depending on your powertrain preference, of course.

RACHEL BURGESS

TEST DATA

AUDI A3 SPORTBACK 35 TDI S LINE S TRONIC

Price new £38,355 **Price as tested** £40,445 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 53.4mpg **Last seen** 26.2.25

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
rachel.burgess@haymarket.com

SNAPSHOTS

MAZDA MX-5

Mileage 6166 **Last seen** 26.2.25
Sorry, reader – a bit of tip run coverage here. Lessons learned? Basically, an MX-5 is fine if you are not throwing away half of your possessions. The boot is deep, but not that wide. The boot release button is artfully tucked away above the numberplate. Which gets *filthy* in the winter. And there's a usefully wide but shallow luggage gap between the rear seats and the hood - but you need to get the roof down first to access it. **MSc**

INEOS GRENADIER

Mileage 10,368 **Last seen** 26.2.25
Our Grenadier is fitted with the optional £3515 heavy-duty (5.5-tonne pulling capacity) winch, but I only knew that because it said so on the spec sheet. It's exceptionally well integrated into the car – hidden behind the front bumper, with two screws removing the panel to get to it – while its remote control is stored in a cubby. I've not used it yet but give it time. **MP**

CUPRA TAVASCAN

Mileage 833 **Last seen** 5.3.25
For someone who loves his music a tad too loud, the Tavascan's standard 12-speaker Sennheiser stereo is just brilliant. The clarity that remains when you crank it up is staggering. This is in part thanks to the Ambeo Concerto software, which adjusts the level of immersion automatically. It's equally brilliant for those who love driving while listening to a podcast or live sport instead. **WR**

USED CARS

HOW TO BUY A FORD KUGA

THE FAMILY SUV BUILT WITH A SPORTING HATCH'S DNA

The dynamic fingerprints of the Focus are all over the practical £2k Kuga

The second-generation Ford Kuga isn't just a versatile, smart-looking and sensible SUV. No, another reason this became one of Ford's best-selling models is because it's a surprisingly rewarding car to drive – even matching some of its premium-badged SUV rivals for refinement and dynamism.

You won't pay a premium price, though. Just £2000 is all you need to snap up a Mk2 Kuga these days – if you can stomach the signs of heavy use and high miles of cars at this price point – but even more recent, better-kept examples can still be had for four figures, so let's get familiar with this family hauler.

The wheelbase is the same as the Mk1's, but with an extra 81mm added to its length and some clever packaging tricks, the Kuga is more capacious in the front and rear. There are generous helpings of head and leg room so adults will feel comfortable in the back. Boot space is far better than its predecessor's too, at 800 litres with the rear seats up, which means there's plenty of room for pets, suitcases, the weekly shop and family paraphernalia.

Perceived quality inside is good and certainly lives up to the high standards that Ford set itself in the mid-2010s. Sure, there are some scratchy plastics here and there, but it's enhanced by some chrome-esque finishes that bolster its upmarket credentials.

Of course, the calibre of finish in the cabin varies according to trim level, and while the entry-level Zetec has alloys, a digital radio and air-con, the slightly swisher

Disciplined body control and agile responses will appeal to keener drivers

What we said then

13 MARCH 2012

"Crossovers like the Nissan Qashqai arguably offered something for keener drivers in need of added 'utility'. But now the Kuga has become a fully fledged SUV, it has not only come of age but has also brought typical Ford-brand dynamism and poise to a segment that badly needs it. We like the Kuga's blend of the abilities you might look for in an SUV. More importantly, we rate it."

Titanium (which has larger wheels, climate control, parking sensors and partial leather trim) is the sweet spot – and only marginally more expensive.

Ford's early Microsoft Sync infotainment system is straightforward but it does feel pretty dated nowadays, so if you're after more modern tech, you'll want the facelifted car, which arrived in 2016. It received the usual styling tweaks and a new engine line-up but, more importantly, inside it gained a new Sync 3 infotainment system with an 8.0in screen, sat-nav, smartphone mirroring and a DAB radio.

As for engines, you can have a pre-facelift car with a 1.6-litre turbo petrol producing either 148bhp or 178bhp. We would avoid the more potent one because it is mated to Ford's early Powershift automatic gearbox and it's not the most robust transmission (see Buyer Beware, right). There's also a 2.0-litre turbo diesel with either 138bhp or 161bhp, the latter fitted with four-wheel drive as standard, the former available with 4WD as an option – useful for towing duties.

The facelift brought in a raft of new Ecoboost engines, the most notable being the addition of a 118bhp petrol four-pot. It's okay for pootling around town but we would stick with the 148bhp version for its all-round capabilities. The 178bhp petrol retains its four-wheel-drive set-up in facelifted cars but gets a more reliable six-speed auto.

Of the diesels, it's the post-facelift mid-rung 148bhp 2.0-litre TDCi we would steer you towards. It has more than enough grunt, will do around 45mpg and can be had with a choice of two- or four-wheel drive.

Irrespective of trim and engine, the Kuga feels very much like a Focus on stilts to drive – which is a good thing. Punt it down a rural back road and it behaves more like a warmed-up hatch than a big family SUV. The steering is precise, the body is taut and it corners flatter and with more agility than most family estates.

Some rivals are a bit softer over lumps and bumps, but the keener driver will welcome the extra engagement and dynamism on their favourite road – even if the kids in the back don't quite appreciate it.

SAM PHILLIPS

Higher trims like this car's lift the ambience as well as the kit roster

"The Kuga's steering is precise, the body is taut and it corners flatter than most family estates"

How to get one in your garage

AN EXPERT'S VIEW

JIM HARRIS, HARRIS ON 4D

"Petrols and diesels suffer from different problems, such as water pump failure; most of the issues tend to be down to electrics. Then there's engine management, diesel particulate filter (DPF) and emissions issues. The Powershift gearbox is troublesome. Four-wheel-drive models tend to have more issues than the front-wheel drive, and higher-spec models with more kit tend to go wrong more often. Higher-spec models tend to suffer from electrical issues due to water ingress, so leaks through the bulkhead and body module contamination."

BUYER BEWARE...

■ ENGINE

Take a diesel Kuga on a long test drive to make sure the DPF is regenerating properly. If the oil level is high, the DPF could be regenerating too often, which can lead to fuel dilution.

Coolant found anywhere other than in the expansion tank could mean that the tank itself is faulty. But a new one is only £15-£30.

Check the oil filter for any white deposits because this could suggest that the coolant and oil are mixing; cooling problems with the Ecoboost engine have earned it the nickname 'Ecoboom' by owners.

■ GEARBOX

Be wary of the pre-facelift Powershift automatic: the plastic retainers inside the gearbox wear over time, break off and get churned up by the cogs. The gearbox then needs to be removed, all the parts replaced and then flushed out. We would suggest you opt for a car with a manual gearbox or the more robust post-facelift auto.

■ DIFFERENTIAL

Listen for a metallic grinding noise from the rear of a four-wheel-drive car. This is caused when the diff leaks oil and a lack of lubrication between the bearings inside means they grind against each other and wear down.

■ BODY

Check the underside of four-wheel-drive cars, which may have seen the odd gravel track or rutted byway.

■ INTERIOR

Feel the inside of the boot and underneath the rubber floor mat for damp. Water can leak into the boot via the roof rail

seals or the high brake light.

Most Kugas will have been a family hauler at some point in their life so assess the trims, seats, carpets, belts and other areas for excessive wear.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

The 2.0-litre diesel four-wheel drive with 178bhp has a 2100kg braked towing capacity so is ideal for towing a caravan or trailer.

The Kuga was rated five stars by Euro NCAP when it was first launched in 2013, scoring highly for both adult occupant (94%) and child occupant (86%) safety.

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£2000-£6999
Broad mix of engines and trims but plenty of 2.0-litre TDCi and Titanium cars. Some with few previous owners and full service history. Typically, early, high-mileage examples.

£7000-£10,999
Mileage is more reasonable but diesel still dominates. More facelifted cars with big miles and less desirable 1.5-litre diesel and petrol engines.

£11,000-£14,999
Lots of tidy facelifted cars with reasonable to low mileage. It's easy to find a one-owner car with full service history for this money. More dealers than private sellers.

£15,000 AND ABOVE
Newer, immaculate Kugas. Many top-spec Vignale cars, as well as ST-Lines.

ONE WE FOUND

FORD KUGA 2.0 TDCi TITANIUM, 2018, 76,000 MILES, £8990

With a full service history, six-month warranty and recent service, this facelifted, well-equipped example is primed for plenty more family-duty use.

My car & I

No windows, no seat padding, no problem

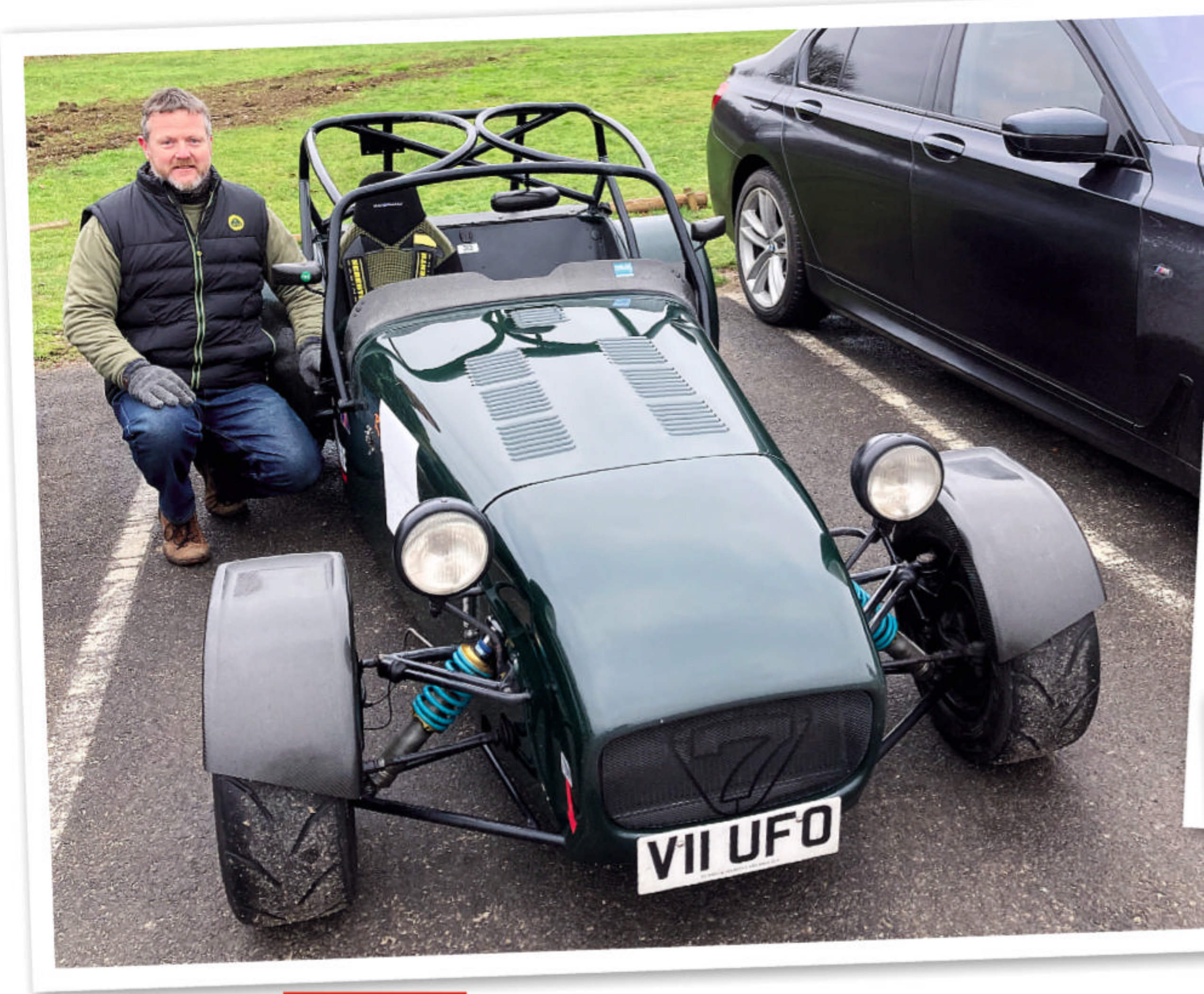
“It’s about as close to motorcycling as I will ever come,” says Daniel Goodison of his Caterham Seven Superlight R, a 220bhp road and track weapon that weighs just 485kg. “There are no side windows, there’s no windscreen, 0-60mph takes 3.5sec and 0-100mph 8.2sec and the 1.8-litre engine is limited to 7500 or 8400rpm on track days. I love it.”

I’ve no doubt he does. It’s barely above freezing when we meet and the roads are covered with salt, but he has driven to deepest Hampshire from Dorset for his car club meet and it’s still only 9.30 in the morning.

“That’s nothing,” he says. “Not long ago, in one day I drove from Blandford [Forum] to Doncaster for a track day, then down to Snetterton and from there back to Blandford. I got back at 2am. Unfortunately, the headlights are like candles.”

Daniel bought the car two years ago from Purbeck Sports Cars in Wareham, Dorset. Registered in 2002, it had 18,000 miles on the clock. He has since added 10,000.

“It’s number 127 of 127 cars built,” he says. “This example was a kit car built at home by a chap who photographed every stage and was obsessed with saving weight. He won his area championship in it, so there’s not much to live up to!”



Our cars

I do love an analogue interior – or do I?

BY WILL RIMELL

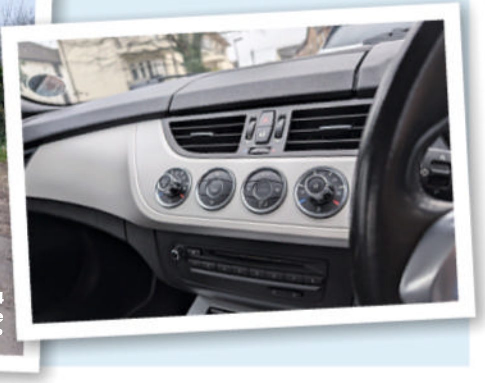
Most of us car lovers yearn for the analogue experience – mainly to have buttons to press and switches to flick rather than touchscreens to navigate.

Well, my 2009 Z4 is the modern car detox you’ve been waiting for; please take a seat. But while the inside of the blue drop-top is a pretty picture to behold (and yes, I do make the Z8 comparison for every new passenger), it really does sum up that classic ‘the grass is always greener’ proverb.

As I no longer daily the Z4, its annoying quirks had left my memory, but some time with it over recently – when it was quite cold and I, of course, had the roof off – brought those niggles back to the fore.

For example, those metal dials you see in the middle of the dash that look just marvellous? Well, they’re about as good at regulating temperature as someone breathing on me. And if I want to move the roof, the controls require more pressure applied than even most bodybuilders can muster.

So for all my love for this car and my desire to go back to the glory days of analogue cabins, I think I would take BMW’s new-generation iDrive system anyway.



Is Rimell’s Z4 really a picture of practicality?

This Seven – 127 of 127 – was built not by Caterham but by its original owner

The car's 1.8-litre four-cylinder engine is a Rover K-series Very High Performance Derivative with strengthened internals.

"The previous owner had raised the rev limit to 8400rpm and been running the engine at 243bhp on competition days," says Daniel. "I've dialled it back to preserve it!"

His Caterham may have candles for headlights but its brakes are, he says, up to the job – sort of: "The braking is 'sufficient'. It has the big brake upgrade but they're still tiny compared with most road cars'."

With no windows and no roof on the car, I wonder how he copes when it rains. "When I'm driving in a straight line, the passage of the car keeps the worst of the rain out," he says. "However, in corners, without the front wheels being tucked into wheel arches, the water comes straight in. Not nice."

Still, this minor discomfort is clearly not enough to discourage Daniel from driving the car on the longest journeys. Is it comfortable?

"The ride isn't bad. The seat isn't padded, but although I have back problems, I don't experience back ache in it. It's a bit loud on long journeys, but on that marathon round trip from Blandford that I mentioned earlier, apart from some ringing in my ears it was bearable."

Daniel bought his Caterham with the intention of doing track days, sprints and hillclimbs and has notched up a few already.

"I've done Goodwood and Castle Combe track days and Shelsley Walsh, Prescott and Gurston Down hillclimbs," he says. "Gurston is fantastic fun and I've got three days booked there this year, plus some races at my local circuit."

Throughout, the Caterham hasn't missed a beat, although Daniel is having the de Dion rear axle replaced at the end of the month, because "there's a bit of play in it".

Always eagle-eyed, I notice that the car has no steering wheel.

"It's a requirement of my insurance policy that it is removed whenever the car is parked," explains Daniel.

I can only imagine that refitting it simply adds to the anticipation of the exciting drive ahead, whatever the weather.

JOHN EVANS

> **"Apart from some ringing in my ears, the marathon was bearable"**

Head to head

CHARLIE MARTIN

RENAULT CLIO RS 197 'MEGLIO'

VS

ALEX WOLSTENHOLME

BMW 116i BRSCC SUPERCUP

Brief: Find a track-prepared car for around £15k. No Caterhams

AW What's better than a track car? A full-blown race car. This 116i has already raced in the BRSCC 1 Series Supercup and is ready to do so again, or attend any track day.

CM So extreme is your BMW that it doesn't have numberplates, which means trailering it to the track – inconvenient and quite expensive.

AW At £11,990, it leaves me enough to buy a ratty old Transit and stick a towbar on it. Something that can do both just means it's compromised. And actually, it can be driven on the road – it's just not recommended…

CM My Renault quite obviously isn't compromised: the Mégane turbo engine it's been given will easily make more than 300bhp and the diff means it can actually put that down. It's proper Porsche-hunting territory – not bad for £4500.

AW Not bad for £4500, but we've got £15,000 to play with, and I'm tempted by the prospect of getting into one-make racing with that. Apparently all I need is to complete a championship registration and a valid racing membership.

CM Don't forget a helmet and fireproofs. Three grand just isn't enough, especially if you end up in a prang – or worse, slow. Best to go cheap and blow the rest on a track instructor. You'll be embarrassing supercar owners in no time.

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

MINI COOPER S 3DR

2003, 117,000 miles, £4499

Track-day newbies should start sensibly, and this supercharged R53 Mini looks the business, with plenty of trick bits fitted, among them lightweight alloys, bucket seats and a Scorpion catback exhaust. It's just been serviced, too, and has a 12-month MOT.

ARIEL ATOM 3.5

2014, 16,000 miles, £30,000

A beast on the road and a thrill ride on track: you can't really go wrong with an Atom. This one is in excellent shape, with a low mileage and just one previous owner, who says it has spent most of its life as a road car.

BBR MAZDA MX-5 2.0

2016, 55,000 miles, £14,950

This may look like a regular ND MX-5, but it has been treated to an array of performance parts from renowned specialist BBR. BHP has been upped from 158 to 251 by a turbo kit and it's fitted with upgraded springs, anti-roll bars, brakes and exhaust.

PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN GT4 RS

2022, 8000 miles, £129,999

The GT4 RS is one of the most special cars ever to come out of Porsche's GT division. It was built for track driving, yet you can happily drive it home after. This one has the all-important Weissach pack, adding plenty of carbonfibre, a titanium roll-cage and a six-point harness.

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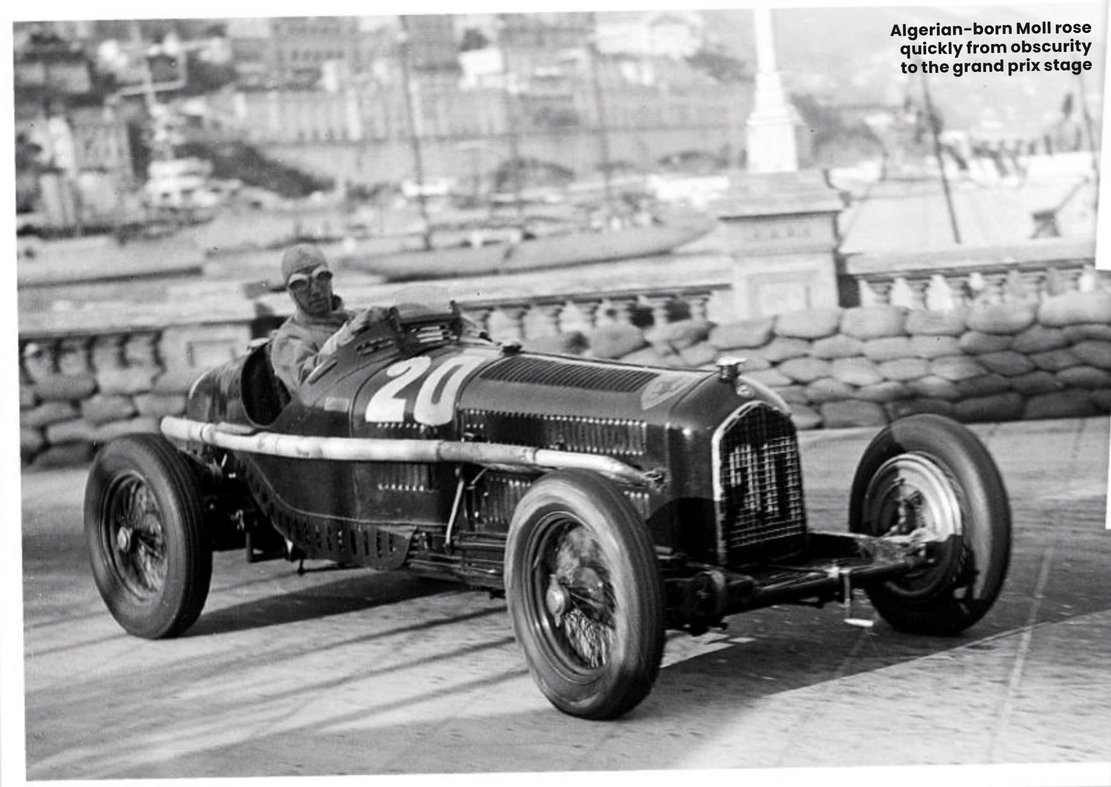
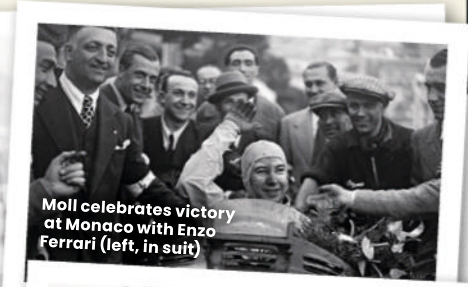
The Autocar Lost in the archive



Algerian-born Moll rose quickly from obscurity to the grand prix stage



Moll celebrates victory at Monaco with Enzo Ferrari (left, in suit)

Fellow French Algerian Marcel Lehoux was Moll's benefactor

Moll got the better of Europe's finest and a Pyrenees snowstorm

Formula 1's forgotten North African heritage

Reading our Formula 1 season preview on p52, the obsessives among you might have realised that rookie Isack Hadjar will be the sport's first competitor from Algeria – making it only the fourth African country ever represented, after Morocco, South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe).

This isn't strictly true, though – not just because Hadjar holds a French licence but because North Africa was actually quite prominent in grand prix racing before the 1950 foundation of the F1 World Championship. There have been two leading Algerian racers, and throughout the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, GPs were held in Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Tunisia and Egypt.

This was because all of those Mediterranean nations were colonies at the time, variously of Spain, France, Italy and Britain.

Indeed, Marcel Lehoux was born to French parents but raised in Algeria (the inverse of Hadjar, incidentally). In 1928, four years after he had won the Casablanca GP, Lehoux added both the Tunis GP and the first Algerian GP to his tally, in the latter mastering a treacherous surface in the rain, would you believe.

(All were street layouts; the only proper circuit in the region, just outside Tripoli, wouldn't be built until 1933.)

Autocar attended the Algerian GP in 1930, reporting: "The grandstand was extremely picturesque because it was occupied in part by a wild and woolly collection of fighting native chiefs from the desert, and they, being fully armed, were treated with the utmost respect, to the detriment of any pit work. It is extremely rare that spectators travel to and from the grandstands on camels, as in this case."

My modern mind was suspicious of the veracity of that 'fully armed' comment, but check out the rifle-filled photo reproduced below!

Bugattis dominate 1930 Algerian GP on Staouéli street circuit

Touareg natives were as interested as the French colonists

In 1932, Lehoux was attending a minor local race (whether by camel or car is lost to history) when his attention was caught by the performance of a young man who was competing in his first-ever race, simply for the fun of it.

Guy Moll, born in Algeria to well-off French and Spanish parents, shortly found himself at the wheel of Lehoux's Bugatti in the Oran GP.

He shocked all by taking the lead almost immediately, which further encouraged Lehoux (unfortunately, a mechanical issue prevented Moll from finishing), and another such display in the Casablanca GP convinced him to unleash his protégé on Europe.

As if taking on France's top talents wouldn't have made things tough enough for Moll, his first European GP was on the tricky new Pau street circuit – in a snowstorm. Cancel it? Don't be ridiculous!

In possibly the worst weather conditions in GP history, Moll led for a bit and finished behind only Lehoux.

Several more highly impressive performances that year convinced Enzo Ferrari to incorporate Moll into his leading Alfa Romeo stable.

Autocar reported after his debut for the scuderia: "Monaco can be trusted to produce surprises, but it is doubtful whether there has ever been quite such a surprise as when, in what amounted to a hush of amazement, Guy Moll, relatively of the second rank, succeeded in winning the GP; and this GP round the houses, with each corner after corner in quick succession, is one of the most arduous tests of driving stamina there is."

That he had benefited from home hero Louis Chiron "hitting a sandbag barrier good and hard" at the end hardly seemed to matter.

That would be his final glory, though. Tragically, a few months later at Pescara, Moll had a horrific fiery crash while chasing the lead, with fatal consequences.

Ferrari would later write: "Moll has been, in my opinion, the only driver to be put in the same class as Tazio Nuvolari: alike because of the affinity of some peculiar mental processes, for the same aggressive spirit, the same coolness in driving, the same faith in taking extreme risk. That day [in Monaco], Moll showed the style of the great champion. He affirmed, blatantly, his personality as a driver, and he justified my faith in him."

KRIS CULMER

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P23 AGH	£375
B2I AGY	£275
AGZ I627	£75
KI2I AJG	£275
LI2I AJH	£375
K27 AJJ	£375
P23 AJK	£375
JI2I AJL	£375
KI23 AJP	£375
KI23 AJT	£375
K28 AKS	£275
R29 AKS	£375
NI2I ALC	£275
F22 ALE	£375
K25 ALL	£275
LI2I ALM	£275
K23 ALP	£375
N29 ALP	£275
PI2I ALP	£275
T3I ALW	£275
V400 AMH	£375
K26 AMW	£375
A05I AND	£275
E504 ANN	£275
P27 ANS	£375
HB53 ANS	£175
C22 APE	£375
S200 APH	£375
C22 APL	£275
P23 APS	£375
S27 APT	£175
L2I ARE	£375
F22 ARE	£275
KI6 ARH	£375
R90 ARJ	£275
D22 ARL	£375
HE03 ARN	£275
R27 ARR	£375
L29 ARR	£275
PI5 ARW	£375
R3I ARY	£375
L500 ARY	£375
OX02 ASA	£175
T88 ASA	£375
L2I ASE	£375
L24 ASK	£375
B23 ASL	£275
K26 ASM	£375
J24 ASN	£375
F23 ASP	£375
ASZ I55	£375
ASZ 2099	£175
G22 ATE	£375
RI2I ATH	£275
B8 ATR	£375
KI7 ATS	£375
K23 ATT	£375
R28 ATT	£275
H2I AUG	£275
D22 AUG	£375
AVI 4357	£75
AVI 4358	£75
AVZ 2339	£75
G22 AYL	£275
F2I AYS	£275
AYZ 4480	£175
PI2I BAB	£375
A24 BAG	£275
J50 BAK	£375
NI2I BAM	£375
F22 BAN	£275
KI23 BAR	£275
K555 BAR	£375
P25 BAX	£375
K32I BAX	£275
E22 BAY	£375
K27 BAY	£375
P999 BAY	£275
K24 BEA	£375
NI23 BEK	£375
H2I BEY	£375
BEZ 4347	£275
BIG 255I	£375
BIG 480I	£275
W23 BJH	£175
B24 BJH	£375
L29 BLA	£275
K27 BOD	£275
KI2I BOD	£175
P29 BRN	£375
P32I BRO	£375
BSZ 434	£275
BSZ I046	£75
BSZ I047	£75
G24 BUC	£375
A23 BUD	£375
L24 BUK	£375
K26 BUK	£275
J29 BUK	£375
BYZ 2I25	£75
BYZ 2I26	£75
BYZ 2I44	£49
BYZ 6980	£49
OL04 CAB	£175
A23 CAC	£375
M32I CAD	£375
N24 CAF	£375
P26 CAF	£175
K28 CAG	£375
D83 CAG	£275
PIII CAG	£175
F26 CAJ	£375
G24 CAV	£375
WI0 CBR	£275
D24 CDB	£375
JI7 CEC	£375
N25 CEC	£275
A24 CED	£375
A24 CEE	£375
N28 CEL	£375
N27 CER	£175
CGZ 207I	£175
D24 CJA	£375
JI2I CJB	£375
LI2I CJB	£375
Y400 CJB	£275
LI2I CJC	£375
S900 CJD	£175
KI2I CJW	£375
H2I CKA	£175
K25 CKS	£275
L26 CKS	£375
A23 CKX	£125
L60 CLS	£375
G24 CMB	£275
JI23 CMB	£375
T99 CMP	£375
P23 CMR	£275
V333 CMW	£275
CMZ 4704	£49
CMZ 4705	£49
CMZ 4706	£49
CNZ 3426	£75
K24 COD	£275
P24 COD	£375
GI8 COE	£375
T26 COE	£175
P27 COE	£275
N28 COM	£275
MI2I COM	£375
K27 COO	£275
N99 COO	£375
GI6 COP	£375
L28 COP	£275
PA05 COS	£275
K27 COT	£275
T32I COT	£175
MI23 COY	£375
K23 CRA	£375
N27 CRA	£275
C23 CRD	£275
A23 CRO	£275
W8 CSD	£375
N26 CUT	£275
R29 CUT	£375
CYZ 4547	£75
CYZ 4549	£75
R400 DAC	£375
P2I DAF	£375
K27 DAG	£275
L50 DAK	£375
K26 DAP	£375
GI4 DAT	£375
K26 DAT	£175
P29 DAT	£275
PD02 DAY	£75
PI56 DAY	£175
E24 DCM	£275
MI8 DCS	£375
A24 DDA	£275
M90 DDC	£75
GI6 DDD	£375
C5 DDJ	£275
P24 DDS	£375
N28 DDY	£375
L25 DEK	£375
M600 DES	£375
N3I DEW	£375
A23 DEX	£375
E7 DGD	£275
DGZ 535	£275
DGZ II47	£75
DGZ 2444	£175
DHZ 77I	£275
DIG 7578	£375
WI6 DJA	£375
F23 DJF	£375
A24 DJN	£375
OX53 DJS	£175
PI2I DJS	£375
NI2I DJT	£275
KI2I DJW	£375
A24 DLH	£375
PI2I DMB	£375
K26 DMG	£375
A23 DMR	£375
A24 DMW	£375
H22 DNG	£375
C2I DNY	£275
G24 DOD	£375
A24 DOL	£375
P24 DOW	£175
E2I DPS	£275
K23 DRB	£375
P27 DRC	£375
K28 DRH	£375
G23 DRM	£375
A23 DRN	£275
G22 DRS	£375
E2I DRU	£375
H2I DSB	£375
A24 DSB	£275
DSZ II4	£275
DSZ I2I3	£175
DSZ 2I06	£75
DSZ 2I07	£75
PI2I DUB	£275
KI2I DUN	£375
K88 DYL	£375
E2I DYS	£375
H24 EAL	£375
P29 EAM	£275
A23 EAR	£275
H24 EAR	£375
B23 EAT	£375
EAZ 66I	£275
A23 ECS	£375
G9 EDE	£375
B2I EDE	£275
K27 EDW	£375
P23 EGG	£275
R29 EGG	£375
PI0 EJH	£375
PI4 ELE	£375
P55 ELM	£275
L27 ELY	£375
N2I ENN	£375
KI2I EON	£375
HI4 ERL	£375
A23 ERN	£375
DI0I ERN	£175
H22 ERS	£375
L23 ERS	£275
J200 ERY	£275
B24 ESS	£375
A24 EST	£375
A24 EYE	£375
K27 FAB	£375
KI2I FAB	£275
P3I FAR	£175
T40 FAR	£375
N28 FAT	£275
K29 FAT	£175
VI5 FEB	£375
A23 FEB	£375
P2I FEE	£275
A24 FEE	£375
J24 FEE	£375
N27 FEN	£275
FHZ 878	£375
RIII FJB	£275
FJZ 669	£175
P24 FOS	£375
P800 FOS	£175
J70 FOW	£275
J3I FRS	£375
HI6 FRY	£375
K24 FRY	£275
FSZ I50I	£75
FSZ I502	£75
F24 FUL	£375
MI00 FUL	£375
K27 GAB	£375
RI2I GAB	£275
T26 GBR	£175
GBZ 566	£275
JI0 GEF	£375
K3I GEF	£275
Y999 GEF	£175
L2I GEL	£375
N27 GEN	£375
S999 GEN	£275
LI5 GGB	£275
K24 GJB	£375
P800 GJB	£175
A24 GJH	£375
F24 GJH	£275
T333 GJH	£175
BI4 GOS	£275
E23 GRM	£375
GSZ 3527	£49
GSZ 3699	£75
XO53 GXS	£75
P23 HAD	£275
PI00 HAD	£175
P27 HAW	£275
T90 HAW	£375
K26 HED	£375
P99 HED	£275
K23 HEP	£375
PW5I HER	£75
A23 HEV	£375
K23 HEW	£275
HIG 5556	£275
E2I HLS	£275
S900 HOB	£375
S963 HOB	£175
N27 HOD	£275
YI2I HOT	£275
C2I HOY	£375
HSZ 4024	£75
HSZ 4042	£75
HSZ 7054	£49
N28 HUL	£375
N29 HUN	£275
L99 HUW	£375
IAZ 344	£375
IDZ 773	£175
IKZ 446	£375
IXZ 3253	£75
SI9 JAA	£275
A23 JAA	£175
E24 JAP	£375
J32I JAW	£375
H24 JBC	£375
JBZ 778	£375
KI7 JCC	£375
A24 JCG	£275
A23 JCR	£375
FI3 JDB	£375
AI7 JDD	£375
D25 JDM	£375
T27 JEB	£275
E23 JEE	£275
P28 JEL	£375
T23 JER	£175
M24 JER	£375
L29 JER	£375
K99 JER	£275
TI2I JER	£75
JEZ 7278	£375
JEZ 7672	£275
JGZ I0I4	£175
JGZ 5596	£75
TII JHB	£375
P333 JJB	£375
B76 JJC	£375
A24 JJD	£375
Y28 JJD	£275
W600 JJM	£375
A24 JJP	£375
K29 JKB	£175
Y500 JLB	£375
L80 JLD	£375
K27 JLH	£375
K32I JLH	£275
H22 JLW	£375
R55 JMA	£375
YI2I JMB	£375
LI2I JME	£375
JI2I JMG	£375
KI23 JMH	£375
K23 JMR	£375
P555 JMR	£175
K55 JMT	£375
P2I JOB	£375
K23 JOD	£375
K27 JOS	£375
K32I JOS	£275
E782 JOY	£275
K32I JPB	£375
PI2I JPC	£175
KI2I JPH	£375
WII JPK	£175
K32I JPM	£375
Y900 JPR	£175
JI2I JPS	£375
N555 JPS	£275
H24 JRP	£375
JRZ I66	£375
JRZ 2329	£175
H22 JSC	£375
A23 JSD	£375
P222 JSM	£275
K26 JSS	£275
F24 JSW	£375
K28 JSW	£275
N29 JTB	£275
N2I JUN	£375
P23 JUS	£175
R29 JUS	£275
P28 KAB	£375
JI23 KAB	£375
E24 KAH	£275
P2I KAN	£275
A24 KAV	£275
M28 KAV	£375
P28 KEE	£375
N32I KER	£375
A24 KES	£375
N24 KEY	£375
KIG I5I	£375
JI23 KJB	£375
EI7 KJP	£275
E2I KLS	£375
J24 KMC	£375
KRZ 7567	£75
KRZ 7568	£49
L26 KYL	£275
H2I KYS	£375
B25 LAC	£375
D25 LAC	£375
P23 LAD	£375
B22 LAG	£375
A24 LAG	£275
P27 LAH	£375
E2I LAK	£375
B23 LAK	£175
A22 LAR	£375
B23 LAR	£275
E22 LAT	£375
B2I LAX	£275
F22 LAX	£275
T28 LEC	£375
B20 LEG	£275
N99 LEG	£175
L700 LEG	£375
A23 LEM	£375
P24 LER	£375
N25 LER	£275
R2I LET	£275
K23 LET	£375
NI5 LEV	£375
LGZ 3565	£175
LGZ 6323	£75
LIG 972I	£175
JI23 LJB	£375
KI23 LJS	£375
J32I LJW	£375
H2I LLB	£275
H2I LLD	£275
K27 LLE	£275
H2I LLG	£175
J2I LLG	£275
H2I LLM	£375
H2I LLP	£175
D2I LLR	£275
A2I LLX	£375
N29 LOC	£375
F24 LOG	£375
P44 LON	£375
K28 LOO	£375
KI23 LOR	£275
K24 LOV	£175
N24 LOV	£375
F2I LSY	£375
S800 LUC	£375
LUI 272	£375
M26 LUM	£375
K2I LUV	£175
F22 LYD	£375
J32I LYD	£375
F2I LYY	£275
A23 LYY	£375
G22 MAA	£375
K24 MAF	£375
J3I MAM	£375
RI23 MAW	£275
P200 MCA	£275
A24 MCJ	£175
N24 MCP	£375
C26 MCS	£375
K32I MCS	£275
K23 MCT	£375
G4I MCT	£275
JI23 MCT	£375
P24 MCW	£375
K29 MCW	£375
KI23 MCW	£275
C24 MDB	£375
K50 MDB	£275
L555 MDS	£375
K26 MEC	£375
P26 MED	£275
N70 MED	£175
H2I MEE	£375
K27 MEE	£375
EL04 MER	£275
K32I MET	£275
R32I MET	£175
G23 MFC	£375
A24 MGB	£275
B24 MGB	£375
EI8 MGM	£275
MGZ 4895	£75
MGZ 4896	£75
PI3 MHW	£75
KI2I MJG	£375
MJI 799	£375
KI2I MJK	£275
K27 MJL	£375
NI2I MJP	£275
JI2I MJR	£375
L700 MJR	£275
JI23 MJT	£375
G23 MLC	£375
A23 MLD	£375
P99 MLH	£375
KI2I MLS	£175
A24 MLW	£275
E23 MMB	£375
L28 MMB	£275
E22 MMC	£375
JI5 MOE	£375
P77 MOE	£275
KI2I MOE	£175
KI2I MOG	£375
H9 MOW	£375
A24 MOW	£175
S70 MOW	£275
P88 MOW	£275
D24 MPW	£275
A24 MPY	£275
C26 MRH	£375
RIII MRH	£375
JI2I MRH	£375
KI2I MRK	£375
A23 MRL	£375
K32I MRP	£275
LI23 MRT	£375
E24 MRY	£375
MRZ 2639	£175
K26 MSH	£275
E24 MSS	£375
KI2I MSS	£175
K27 MSW	£275
H22 MTB	£375
Y25 MTB	£275
B22 MTH	£375
Y24 MTH	£275
MUI 88I	£375
C22 MUS	£375
E22 MUS	£275
MXZ 33I0	£175
A2I MYM	£275
YI4 NAG	£375
P24 NAP	£375
R29 NAP	£175
T28 NAR	£375
N29 NAR	£275
A23 NDW	£375
P23 NED	£275
R28 NED	£375
L28 NGE	£275
YI2I NGE	£175
A23 NGL	£375
A23 NGY	£275
NGZ I0I2	£75
NGZ I022	£75
K32I NJH	£275
G23 NJP	£375
NJZ 227	£175
GU54 NNE	£175
P3I NNN	£275
A23 NNS	£275
A22 NNT	£175
A23 NNY	£275
C24 NOE	£375
W44 NOV	£175
NRZ 474	£275
A2I NSE	£375
A24 NSL	£375
A22 NTY	£275
A24 NUT	£275
L27 NUT	£375
A2I NYS	£275
C23 OAT	£375
B22 OBB	£375
H2I OBY	£275
OBZ 552	£275
A2I OCH	£275
P23 OCT	£275
H22 ODG	£375
J23 OEE	£275
OGZ 5449	£175
OJZ 878	£275
P28 OLD	£375
T3I OLD	£275
N3I ONG	£375
C2I OPP	£375
H23 ORN	£375
H22 OSK	£175
C2I OTS	£275
H2I OTS	£275
B2I OVE	£375
N2I OVE	£375
H23 OVE	£375
H23 OWL	£375
K28 OWL	£275
OXZ I03I	£175
E2I OYD	£375
H2I OYD	£375
K3I OYD	£275
K32I PAC	£275
S200 PAD	£375
K3I PAP	£275
KI2I PAS	£275
A633 PAT	£375
L29 PAW	£375
C8 PBW	£375
A4 PCD	£375
K23 PEG	£375
RI2I PEG	£75
MI2I PER	£275
JI23 PER	£375
S300 PES	£275
K23 PET	£375
N7 PEX	£275
PGZ I264	£75
PGZ I265	£75
L32I PJB	£375
L23 PJC	£375
H24 PJG	£375
R222 PJM	£375
N2I PJS	£375
K26 PJW	£375
KI2I PJW	£275
AI5 PLC	£275
PLZ 262	£275
VI2I PMC	£275
D20 PMS	£175
JG05 POT	£175
N25 POT	£275
K3I PPP	£175
K2I PPS	£275
A24 PRK	£375
L27 PRO	£375
PRZ I0I2	£175
PRZ 2635	£75
E23 PUD	£375
K27 PUD	£275
K23 PUG	£375
N27 PUG	£275
J50 PUL	£375
PXI 966	£275
PXZ I834	£75
PXZ I835	£75
A23 RAL	£275
N27 RAL	£175
RAZ I258	£375
RAZ I370	£275
PIII RDA	£75
G24 RDD	£275
A24 RDH	£275
PI2I REB	£275
M666 REL	£275
G007 RES	£75
K3I RES	£175
YIII REX	£275
P700 REX	£175
C7 RFH	£275
RFZ 22I	£175
RGZ I0I8	£175
RGZ 2807	£75
RJZ I9I	£275
L28 RKS	£275
RKZ 878	£275
E24 RLL	£275
H23 RMB	£275
KI2I RMS	£275
A23 RMW	£275
K23 ROE	£275
L24 ROE	£275
AI5 ROJ	£275
A23 ROL	£175
L24 ROL	£275
L600 ROW	£275
RRZ I089	£75
RRZ I206	£175
RRZ I207	£175
K26 RSB	£275
G24 RUB	£175
K23 RYE	£275
K27 SAC	£275
A23 SAK	£275
RI2I SAW	£275
SBZ 337	£275
HI9 SCR	£275
P3I SEC	£275
K2I SED	£275
K25 SEP	£175
P32I SER	£175
PI2I SES	£275
T944 SET	£75
SEZ 774	£275
SGZ I22	£275
SGZ 2357	£75
SGZ 2358	£175
SGZ 2359	£175
P27 SHO	£275
P29 SHP	£275
KI23 SHY	£275
SHZ 359I	£375
SIG I032	£275
K26 SKA	£275
LI2I SLS	£275
H23 SMD	£275
Y300 SMR	£175
E22 SMY	£275
T29 SOO	£275
RI2I SOO	£175
K26 SOP	£275
H23 SPR	£275
L32I SPY	£275
SRZ I265	£75
SRZ I36I	£175
K3I SSO	£275
N60 SUL	£175
P888 SUL	£275
K600 SUS	£175
P800 SUS	£275
SXZ 2052	£75
SXZ 2053	£75
KI2I TAB	£175
P2I TAC	£275
P54 TAD	£175
N25 TAF	£275
L27 TAJ	£275
H24 TAL	£275
L400 TAP	£275
PI2I TAS	£275
K2I TAT	£275
TAZ I785	£375
N27 TEE	£275
TGZ I58I	£175
K28 THE	£275
THZ I829	£75
TIG I698	£275
TJZ 252	£375
K27 TMB	£175
H2I TNY	£275
N653 TOD	£175
A24 TOP	£275
AS05 TOR	£275
PI2I TOR	£275
LIII TPH	£75
PIII TRH	£75
TRZ I348	£175
TRZ I349	£175
TRZ I352	£75
K28 TTH	£275
P28 TTT	£275
PI2I TTT	£175
D23 UFO	£275
UIG I2I6	£75
URZ 2234	£75
URZ 3274	£49
T29 USA	£175
E24 VEE	£275
K32I VEN	£275
VIG I22	£275
VIG I027	£75
K3I VOS	£175
VRZ 3282	£75
VRZ 3283	£75
VRZ 3284	£75
N27 WAG	£275
P32I WAG	£175
KI2I WAY	£175
A23 WBA	£275
P24 WED	£275
RI2I WED	£75
S900 WED	£175
LOI0 WES	£275
NI2I WES	£275
Y400 WES	£175
WEZ 7800	£275
WHZ I0I9	£275
WIG II6	£375
WIG 2I58	£175
WIG 2I59	£175
K23 WLS	£275
XIG 3678	£75
XIG 3867	£75
YHZ I490	£49
YHZ I49I	£75
YUI I425	£75
YUI I479	£49

REGISTRATIONS URGENTLY WANTED FOR IMMEDIATE PURCHASE

ROAD TEST RESULTS

Autocar's history of the independent, objective and empirical road testing of new cars is the longest in the world. But like everything that endures, our road testing process has always moved with the times.

Until recently, it was thought that our first instrumented road test report was published on an Austin Seven in April 1928, but fresh research has lately revealed that the tradition is older still.

For more than a century, these road tests have been verifying, describing and illustrating the performance and characteristics in close detail, one new car at a time. Driving impressions have always been a key component part of them, around which other elements have changed. In early years, these test elements included benchmarking of braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later they expanded to take in acceleration, top speed and stopping distance, as well as cruising noise level. Cabin dimensions and measured weight became included too.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated state of charge. All are key indicators of the integrity of vehicle engineering in this emerging era.

Some of our road tests also include lap-time performance benchmarks where appropriate, but all are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car - and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into their findings and learn more about more than a century of road tests with a subscription to the ever-expanding digital Autocar Archive (visit themagazineshop.com/aca23ed/aca).

Matt Saunders, road test editor

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

ABARTH

500 Esseesse ★★★★☆ 25.3.09
Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.
7.6 6.5 1135 35.8 -

500e Turismo ★★★⯪☆ 9.8.23
A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.
6.9 6.4 1395 - 142

595 Competizione ★★★⯪☆ 26.2.14
Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.
7.5 6.4 1135 39.2 -

ALFA ROMEO

Giulia Quadrifoglio ★★★★⯪ 29.3.17
Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.
4.5 3.2 1700 35.7 -

Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione
★★★⯪☆ 3.1.18
Spry-handling SUV is likeable, if short of the class's usual refinements.
6.8 7.0 1815 49.7 -

Stelvio Quadrifoglio ★★★⯪☆ 9.1.19
A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.
4.0 3.3 1931 31.9 -

Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD
★★★★☆ 28.6.23
Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.
5.7 5.3 1784 32.2 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

ALPINE

A110 Première Edition ★★★★★ 16.5.18
Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.
4.7 3.8 1125 45.6 -

A110 Légende GT ★★★★⯪ 9.3.22
The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.
4.8 3.9 1140 40.2 -

A110 R ★★★⯪☆ 15.11.23
Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.
4.2 3.5 1094 39.7 -

ARIEL

Atom 4 ★★★★★ 9.10.19
Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.
3.2 2.4 680 39.2 -

ASTON MARTIN

Vantage ★★★★⯪ 18.9.24
Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.
3.5 2.6 1745 28.5 -

DBS Superleggera ★★★★★ 21.11.18
Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.
3.7 2.7 1910 25.6 -

DBX ★★★★⯪ 28.10.20
Does everyday driver appeal better than any other super-SUV.
4.6 3.8 2328 24.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

DBX 707 ★★★★☆ 30.11.22
A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.
3.3 2.8 2278 26.2 -

AUDI

A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition ★★★⯪☆ 2.10.19
Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.
7.9 8.4 1209 57.0 -

S3 Sportback ★★★⯪☆ 18.11.20
Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.
4.8 4.2 1552 39.0 -

RS4 Avant ★★★★☆ 14.2.18
A hot estate that oozes class but is curiously short on charisma.
4.0 3.5 1790 36.7 -

S4 TDI ★★★★☆ 18.9.19
Diesel power sparks an appealingly different identity for this fast Audi.
4.6 4.1 1871 54.3 -

S5 Launch Edition ★★★★☆ 15.1.25
Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.
4.1 3.8 2027 33.7 -

A5 Sportback 2.0 TFSI 252PS Quattro S Line S Tronic ★★★⯪☆ 8.3.17
Sleek mid-sized executive fastback is still short of a selling point beyond its style.
5.7 5.3 1535 41.1 -

A6 Avant 40 TDI S Line S Tronic
★★★★☆ 14.11.18
High-tech throwback is a timely reminder of what Audi does best.
8.4 7.5 1710 50.1 -

RS6 Avant GT ★★★★☆ 5.2.25
Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.
3.2 2.7 2144 26.3 -

A6 50 TFSIe Quattro S Line
★★★★☆ 5.1.22
Hybrid tech boosts saloon's refinement, charm and running credentials.
5.7 5.2 2077 45.4 34

A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport
★★★⯪☆ 11.7.18
Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.
5.8 5.3 1880 53.1 -

A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport
★★★⯪☆ 17.6.20
Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be.
- - 2330 - -

E-tron 55 Quattro ★★★★⯪ 26.6.19
A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.
5.4 4.2 2569 - 218

E-tron S Quattro ★★★⯪☆ 2.6.21
A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.
4.2 3.6 2643 - -

Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport ★★★⯪☆ 9.11.16
Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.
8.1 8.2 1316 - -

SQ2 Quattro S Tronic ★★★★☆ 20.3.19
More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.
4.5 4.1 1530 34.5 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

Q4 E-tron 40 Sport ★★★⯪☆ 7.7.21
Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.
8.1 7.8 2112 - -

Q5 2.0 TDI 190PS Quattro S Line S Tronic
★★★★☆ 15.3.17
Like the previous Q5 but with additional class, dynamism and polish.
8.3 8.5 1770 42.5 -

SQ5 TSI Quattro ★★★⯪☆ 21.6.17
Mid-sized performance SUV bites off more than it can chew.
5.5 5.0 1870 32.6 -

SQ5 Sportback TDI Quattro
★★★⯪☆ 3.8.22
Not the sharpest fast SUV, but the real-world appeal is clear to see.
5.1 4.6 2023 49.0 -

Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1
★★★⯪☆ 2.10.24
EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.
5.3 4.3 - 2.8 247

Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 12.8.15
Chiselled, plush, suave and spacious. Only so-so to drive, though.
6.2 6.2 2245 - -

SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro ★★★★⯪ 26.10.16
A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.
5.1 4.5 2330 37.9 -

Q8 50 TDI S Line ★★★★☆ 26.9.18
Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.
6.9 6.7 2285 40.1 -

R8 V10 Plus ★★★★☆ 30.12.15
Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.
3.1 2.6 1730 - -

BENTLEY

Bentayga W12 ★★★★⯪ 18.5.16
Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.
4.9 4.4 2440 - -

Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline
★★★★☆ 24.4.24
Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.
4.4 3.8 2600 25.6 -

Continental GT W12 First Edition
★★★★⯪ 2.5.18
Superb luxury coupé has added dynamism but not enough to top the class.
3.6 2.9 2295 26.4 -

Continental GT Speed ★★★★☆ 22.12.21
Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.
3.4 2.7 2279 22.0 -

Continental GTC V8 S ★★★★⯪ 19.4.23
Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.
3.6 3.2 2295 29.1 -

Flying Spur W12 ★★★★⯪ 15.7.20
Trounces rivals for driver appeal but not in every way that matters.
3.9 3.2 2500 32.5 -

Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner
★★★★⯪ 17.8.22
Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.
4.4 3.9 2596 30.1 28

BMW

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
120 M Sport ★★★⯪☆ 31.12.24 Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.	7.3	6.8	1489	45.8	-
218i M Sport Gran Coupé ★★★☆☆ 8.4.20 Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.	8.8	8.4	1375	58.2	-
220i M Sport Coupé ★★★★☆ 1.6.22 A good coupé rather than a great sports car.	7.3	7.3	1546	46.8	-
M2 Coupé Manual ★★★★⯪ 12.7.23 Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.	4.5	3.8	1687	32.1	-
320d M Sport Auto ★★★★★ 15.5.19 BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.	6.9	6.8	1639	63.3	-
330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring ★★★★⯪ 15.1.20 An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.	5.5	5.2	1922	52.6	-
330e M Sport ★★★★⯪ 1.7.20 Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.	-	-	1740	-	-
M440i xDrive ★★★★☆ 6.1.21 A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.	4.1	3.7	1775	44.0	-
M4 Competition ★★★★⯪ 21.4.21 A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.	3.9	2.9	1800	32.7	-
i4 M50 ★★★★☆ 19.1.22 Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.	4.1	3.2	2248	-	186
M4 CSL ★★★★☆ 16.11.22 A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.	3.6	2.7	1625	31.1	-
M5 ★★★⯪☆ 29.1.25 A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.	3.5	2.8	2373	27.3	35
i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro ★★★⯪☆ 29.11.23 Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.	5.4	4.4	2213	-	235
550e xDrive M Sport Pro ★★★★☆ 3.4.24 Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.	4.4	3.5	2232	40.1	47
i7 xDrive60 M Sport ★★★★⯪ 15.2.23 It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.	4.5	3.4	2758	-	264
840d xDrive ★★★★☆ 16.1.19 A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.	5.0	4.6	1901	49.2	-
M8 Competition Convertible ★★★⯪☆ 5.2.20 Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.	3.3	2.7	2020	31.6	-

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
M8 Competition ★★★⯪☆ 3.6.20 Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.	-	-	1960	-	-
X1 xDrive23i M Sport ★★★⯪☆ 25.1.23 A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.	6.4	6.0	1800	45.6	-
X4 M Competition ★★★☆☆ 13.11.19 Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.	4.0	3.3	2028	29.0	-
X5 xDrive30d M Sport ★★★★☆ 2.1.19 Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.	6.6	6.6	2279	43.1	-
X6 M Competition ★★★☆☆ 20.3.24 Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.	3.5	3.1	2442	29.3	-
X7 M50i M Performance xDrive ★★★★☆ 9.9.20 Stunningly large and enviably refined but too excessive for many.	4.8	3.9	2583	30.5	-
X7 M60i xDrive ★★★★☆ 29.3.23 Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.	4.2	3.7	2600	28.9	-
iX xDrive50 M Sport ★★★★⯪ 2.3.22 Takes the luxury EV to elevated heights, but its design is easy to criticise.	4.4	3.4	2593	-	252
Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack ★★★★☆ 21.8.24 Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.	5.7	5.9	1561	36.9	-

BMW ALPINA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
B3 GT Touring ★★★★⯪ 15.1.25 Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.	3.3	2.7	1910	29.4	-
B8 Gran Coupé ★★★★☆ 22.9.21 Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.	3.5	2.8	2100	-	-

BYD

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atto 3 Design ★★★☆☆ 31.5.23 Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.	7.0	6.2	1787	-	201
Seal Design ★★★⯪☆ 17.1.24 Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.	5.8	4.7	2116	-	279

CATERHAM

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Seven 160 ★★★★☆ 20.11.13 Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.	8.4	8.7	510	44.8	-
Seven 620S ★★★★⯪ 9.3.16 Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.	3.8	4.2	650	29.5	-
Seven 420 Cup ★★★★⯪ 31.8.22 Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.	4.2	3.4	560	35.3	-

CHEVROLET

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corvette 3LT ★★★★☆ 22.6.22 Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.	3.9	3.2	1679	32.9	-
Corvette Z06 3LZ ★★★★☆ 16.8.23 Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.	3.1	2.4	1670	26.1	-

CITROEN

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ami Colour ★★⯪☆☆ 11.1.23 Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.	-	-	471	-	39
C3 Puretech 110 Flair ★★★⯪☆ 28.12.16 Dynamically challenged, but a cheery design makes this supermini interesting.	9.6	9.4	1050	62.3	-
C3 Aircross Puretech 110 Flair ★★★⯪☆ 7.3.18 Practical small crossover isn't outstanding to drive but is likeable nonetheless.	11.5	10.7	1159	39.5	-
C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto ★★★☆☆ 26.5.21 Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.	9.5	9.2	1320	56.4	-
ë-C4 X Shine ★★★⯪☆ 3.5.23 EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.	9.7	8.8	1623	-	162
C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus ★★★⯪☆ 13.2.19 Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.	9.0	8.5	1540	47.8	-
C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus ★★★★☆ 28.9.22 Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.	7.8	7.1	1502	47.8	-

CUPRA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Born 204PS 58kWh V3 ★★★⯪☆ 6.7.22 As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.	6.7	6.2	1794	-	220
Born VZ First Edition ★★★★☆ 9.10.24 An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.	5.4	4.2	1996	3.5	269
Leon Estate 310PS VZ3 ★★★★☆ 8.9.21 Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.	4.9	4.3	1707	40.1	-
Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2 ★★★★☆ 27.7.22 Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.	5.9	4.7	1468	43.4	-
Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG ★★★⯪☆ 23.1.19 Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.	4.9	4.4	1615	36.7	-
Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG ★★★★⯪ 3.2.21 Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.	5.1	4.3	1583	36.4	-
Tavascan V1 ★★★☆☆ 5.2.25 Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.	6.0	5.0	2129	3.2	246

DACIA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige ★★★★☆ 28.4.21 Cut-price crossover is compromised in surprisingly few areas.	11.9	11.9	1096	54.1	-
Duster SCe 115 4x2 Comfort ★★★★☆ 22.8.18 Comfortable, simple SUV keeps its budget family motoring star quality.	13.1	12.6	1286	42.2	-
Duster Hybrid 140 Journey ★★★★⯪ 27.11.24 Notably improved yet barely any pricier.	9.7	8.7	1413	40.2	-
Jogger TCe 110 Comfort ★★★★⯪ 20.4.22 Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.	11.0	11.0	1267	48.5	-

DS

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige ★★★☆☆ 10.7.19 No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.	8.8	8.3	1205	48.6	-
4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+ ★★★⯪☆ 29.6.22 High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.	7.4	6.0	1706	44.7	26
7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige ★★★⯪☆ 19.9.18 DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.	8.6	7.0	1616	44.6	-
7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première ★★★⯪☆ 26.4.23 More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.	5.7	4.6	1956	36.6	29
9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus ★★★⯪☆ 2.2.22 Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.	8.6	7.1	1886	44.7	20

FERRARI

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
296 GTB ★★★★★ 21.12.22 Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.	2.7	1.9	1648	37.8	15
SF90 Stradale ★★★★☆ 3.11.21 Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.	2.5	1.8	1698	24.4	16

FIAT

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Panda 1.2 Easy ★★★★⯪ 25.4.12 Was everything a city car ought to be but is now way past its prime.	14.6	15.6	1020	49.1	-
Panda 4x4 Twinair ★★★★☆ 17.4.13 A lovable four-wheel-drive miniature that trades space for style and charm.	14.6	15.8	1195	44.2	-
500 1.4 Lounge ★★★★☆ 19.9.07 Enjoyable city car with the substance to back up its style.	10.3	10.4	1065	42.8	-
500C 1.2 Pop ★★★★☆ 5.8.09 Landaulet hits the spot every bit as well as the regular hatchback and is often better.	13.2	14.4	1035	48.3	-

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
500 Twinair Lounge ★★★⯪☆ 24.11.10 Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.	11.7	13.0	1070	42.1	-
500e 42kWh Icon ★★★★☆ 26.1.22 More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.	8.1	7.7	1365	-	142
600e La Prima ★★★⯪☆ 27.3.24 Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.	8.8	7.7	1587	-	173

FORD

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fiesta 1.0 Ecoboost 125PS Titanium ★★★★⯪ 9.8.17 A dynamically brilliant supermini but no longer the best one.	6.6	7.8	1218	48.2	-
Fiesta ST ★★★★⯪ 15.8.18 Great to drive and supreme value but not better than before in all aspects.	6.6	7.8	1218	48.2	-
Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X ★★★★⯪ 20.2.19 Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.	8.9	7.8	1417	43.8	-
Focus ST ★★★★☆ 11.9.19 Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.	6.1	4.9	1433	40.7	-
Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium ★★★★⯪ 25.3.20 The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.	10.0	9.6	1260	50.0	-
Puma ST ★★★★☆ 24.3.21 Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.	7.2	6.2	1301	41.5	-
Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD ★★★⯪☆ 23.10.24 Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.	5.8	4.8	2067	2.9	262
Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line ★★★⯪☆ 24.6.20 Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.	-	-	1844	-	-
Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD ★★★★☆ 23.6.21 Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.	6.8	5.6	2130	-	-
Mustang Mach-E GT AWD ★★★☆☆ 27.4.22 Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.	4.2	3.5	2298	-	-
Mustang Dark Horse ★★★⯪☆ 20.11.24 Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.	4.5	3.5	1853	26.1	-
Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium ★★★⯪☆ 10.7.24 Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.	10.8	10.6	1426	47.4	-
Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited ★★★★☆ 8.5.24 Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.	12.1	11.8	1971	38.8	-
Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak ★★★★⯪ 14.6.23 Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.	9.8	9.9	2348	36.6	-
F-150 Lightning Platinum ★★★⯪☆ 17.5.23 Electric truck has huge utility and appealing range, but its size and price will put many off.	4.5	3.7	3121	-	288

GENESIS

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line ★★★⯪☆ 10.11.21 Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.	7.2	6.7	1751	60.4	-
Electrified G80 ★★★⯪☆ 12.10.22 Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.	4.4	4.0	2349	-	272
GV60 Sport Plus ★★★★☆ 24.8.22 Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.	3.8	3.1	2192	-	220
GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater ★★★⯪☆ 15.9.21 Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.	6.7	6.6	2217	45.0	-

GWM ORA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition ★★⯪☆☆ 1.2.23 Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.	7.7	7.2	1580	-	154

HONDA

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
E Advance ★★★⯪☆ 26.8.20 More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.	7.9	-	1535	-	110
Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX ★★★⯪☆ 7.10.20 Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.	9.6	10.0	1248	57.0	-
Civic Type R GT ★★★★⯪ 25.10.17 Hot hatch is a sheer delight for enthusiast drivers and their bank balances.	5.7	7.1	1400	57.0	-
HR-V e:HEV Advance Style ★★★⯪☆ 24.11.21 Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.	9.2	9.3	1397	43.2	-
e:Ny1 Advance ★★★☆☆ 1.11.23 EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.	8.6	6.9	1756	-	211

HYUNDAI

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
i10 1.2 MPi Premium ★★★★☆ 15.4.20 Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.	12.3	12.9	999	52.5	-
i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect ★★★⯪☆ 24.2.21 Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.	9.7	10.1	1065	63.5	-
i20 N ★★★★⯪ 25.8.21 N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.	6.1	5.4	1231	50.6	-
i30 Tourer 1.4 T-GDi Premium SE ★★★⯪☆ 13.9.17 Competent, servile, inoffensive-looking family estate offers little to like or dislike.	9.5	9.7	1425	48.9	-
i30 N Performance ★★★⯪☆ 28.12.17 Hyundai's first hot hatch attempt is fast and full-blooded with rough edges.	6.4	5.6	1478	43.1	-
Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate ★★★⯪☆ 7.6.23 Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.	7.2	6.2	2006	-	272
Kona 1.0 120PS Advance ★★★★☆ 6.9.23 Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.	10.4	10.3	1352	50.4	-
Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium ★★★★☆ 17.3.21 Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.	7.6	6.2	1612	47.7	-
Ioniq 5 N ★★★★★ 7.8.24 A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.	3.5	2.7	2221	-	224
Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium ★★★★☆ 16.10.24 A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.	7.9	7.5	2007	32.9	-
Nexo ★★★⯪☆ 12.6.19 Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.	9.6	9.7	1852	-	-

INEOS

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster ★★★⯪☆ 20.9.23 Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.	8.0	8.1	2682	20.9	-

JAGUAR

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
XE 2.0 200PS R-Sport ★★★★⯪ 1.7.15 Junior saloon hits the spot, matching the best of its German rivals at their own game.	7.6	6.7	1530	48.7	-
XF Sportbrake 300PS R-Sport AWD ★★★⯪☆ 17.4.19 Estate is built on enthusiast values but in need of a wider update.	6.6	6.2	1727	36.8	-
E-Pace D180 AWD SE ★★★⯪☆ 11.4.18 Misses the mark for keen drivers but is a desirable SUV nevertheless.	9.9	10.5	1768	49.2	-
I-Pace EV400 S ★★★★⯪ 12.9.18 Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.	4.5	3.5	2236	-	-
F-Pace SVR ★★★★⯪ 24.7.19 Broad-batted and can vividly thrill but hasn't forgotten its SUV roots.	4.1	3.5	2070	29.4	-
F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE ★★★★⯪ 1.12.21 Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.	5.1	4.6	2264	-	24
F-Type V8 S Convertible ★★★★☆ 12.6.13 As good to drive as it is to behold – but at a material and financial cost.	4.0	3.4	1810	28.5	-
F-Type P575 R AWD Coupé ★★★★☆ 29.4.20 The same likeable bruiser behind those prettier features.	-	-	1743	-	-

JEEP

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Avenger Electric Summit ★★★⯪☆ 24.1.24 Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.	8.3	6.9	1601	-	172
Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★⯪☆ 3.10.18 Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.	11.0	11.5	1540	44.8	-
Compass 4xe S ★★★☆☆ 16.2.22 Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.	6.4	5.7	1872	46.9	22
Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★⯪☆ 28.10.15 Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.	10.8	11.2	1502	52.6	-
Renegade 4xe Trailhawk ★★★☆☆ 30.6.21 Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.	6.7	5.6	1816	39.4	21

TOP 3

BEST USED 4x4s

1 Jeep Cherokee (XJ)

2 Toyota Land Cruiser Amazon

3 Fiat Panda 4x4

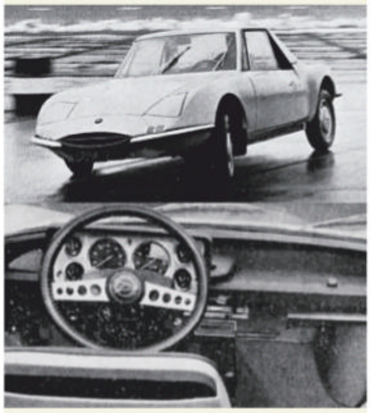
SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Road tests revisited

1994 BUGATTI EB110 GT

The most illustrious luxury and performance brand of the pre-war era is revived with a Jaguar XJ220 rival. "Sets spanking new standards for ride and agility and offers delicious rewards", all while "there isn't another supercar that is so friendly".

Price £285,500
Engine V12, 3500cc, quad-turbocharged, petrol
Power 553bhp at 8000rpm
Torque 451lb ft at 3750rpm
Weight 1566kg
0-60mph 4.5sec
0-100mph 9.6sec
Top speed 213mph
Economy 18.8mpg



1969 MATRA M530A

First design from French firm is a quirky little 2+2 sports coupé with a V4 from Ford of Germany in its middle. "Unusually refined. Excellent ride, allied to very good steering and handling. Very economical but performance not outstanding. Soundly built and very well finished."

Price £2160 (est)
Engine V4, 1699cc, petrol
Power 73bhp at 4800rpm
Torque 98lb ft at 2800rpm
Weight 1053kg
0-30mph 4.6sec
0-60mph 15.6sec
Top speed 97mph
Economy 26.9mpg

READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE*

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland	★★★★☆	10.4.19	Off-road icon is now more competent on it.	9.0	9.1	2122	37.6	-

KGM

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Tivoli XLV ELX Auto	★★★☆☆	14.9.16	Practical, well-priced crossover is competent but far from compelling.	12.0	12.6	1469	-	-

KIA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Picanto 1.0 MPI 2	★★★⯪☆	11.9.24	No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.	13.4	13.9	985	51.4	-
Ceed 1.6 CRDi 115bhp 2	★★★★☆	29.8.18	Big step up in the family hatchback class is a watershed moment for Kia.	9.9	9.6	1411	70.3	-
Proceed 1.4 T-GDi GT-Line S	★★★⯪☆	27.2.19	Alluring and interesting but not quite as special to drive as it looks.	9.5	8.9	1475	42.6	-
Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition	★★★⯪☆	20.11.19	Looks good and drives well but lacks some practicality and polish.	9.3	8.7	1452	46.8	-
Soul EV Urban	★★★⯪☆	5.7.23	Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.	8.0	8.3	1569	-	147
Niro EV 3	★★★★☆	7.9.22	A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.	6.9	5.6	1739	-	246
EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line	★★★★☆	31.12.24	New-era Niro is rationally compelling but not a game-changer.	7.2	6.4	1858	2.6	265
Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S	★★★⯪☆	15.6.22	Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive.	7.3	6.4	1658	44.8	-
EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S	★★★★☆	9.10.24	Not the outstanding EV it once was but still a likeably bold choice.	7.5	6.3	–	2.9	227
EV6 GT	★★★⯪☆	4.10.23	Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.	3.6	2.7	2161	-	209
Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2	★★★⯪☆	20.1.21	Lacks polish, but its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.	8.5	7.9	2006	43.3	-
EV9 GT-Line S	★★★★☆	31.1.24	Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.	5.1	4.6	2660	-	220

LAMBORGHINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Huracán Performante	★★★★⯪	11.10.17	Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.	2.9	2.0	1590	22.4	-
Huracán Evo RWD	★★★★⯪	20.5.20	Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.	-	-	1389	-	-
Revuelto	★★★★⯪	4.12.24	New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.	2.5	1.7	1960	24.1	6
Urus	★★★★☆	3.7.19	Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind.	3.3	2.8	2285	28.5	-

LAND ROVER

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★⯪	10.2.21	A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.	6.8	5.9	2158	32.7	24
Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE	★★★★☆	8.1.20	Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.	10.3	10.5	2145	47.5	-
Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury	★★★★⯪	12.4.17	A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.	8.7	8.8	2230	-	-
Range Rover Velar D240 HSE	★★★⯪☆	30.8.17	Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.	9.3	9.0	2089	48.2	-
Defender 110 P400 X	★★★★⯪	13.5.20	World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.	-	-	2388	-	-
Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE	★★★★⯪	2.11.22	Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.	7.2	6.6	2511	42.5	-
Range Rover Sport SV Edition One	★★★⯪☆	28.8.24	More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.	3.9	5.1	2546	28.9	-
Range Rover D350 HSE	★★★★⯪	13.7.22	A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.	6.3	6.0	2667	35.9	-

LEXUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
LBX FWD Premium Plus Design	★★★⯪☆	29.5.24	Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.	8.4	8.4	1306	45.2	-
NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack	★★★★☆	16.3.22	Interesting, refined and efficient, but not as polished as the best.	7.1	6.7	1812	44.7	-
RX 500h F Sport	★★★⯪☆	22.3.23	Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.	6.1	5.5	2088	31.7	-
ES 300h Takumi	★★★⯪☆	6.2.19	Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.	8.7	7.6	1742	48.8	-
LS 500h Premier	★★★☆☆	6.6.18	Limo has never been more appealing or less competitive in key areas.	5.9	5.3	2404	42.2	-
RC F Ultimate Edition	★★★⯪☆	6.11.24	Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.	4.7	3.8	1733	30.1	-
LM 350h AWD Takumi	★★★☆☆	7.2.24	MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.	8.6	8.2	2368	40.5	-

LOTUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Eletre R	★★★⯪☆	24.7.24	There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.	3.1	2.2	2682	-	216

MASERATI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghibli Diesel	★★★⯪☆	12.3.14	Saloon isn't lacking in style but is a little short on substance.	6.5	6.0	2040	40.4	-
Grecale Trofeo	★★★⯪☆	18.10.23	A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.	3.6	3.2	2097	33.6	-
Levante Diesel	★★★☆☆	30.11.16	A mildly interesting also-ran, with a weak engine and so-so handling.	6.8	6.9	2205	41.5	-
Levante S Granlusso	★★★⯪☆	8.5.19	Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it.	5.1	4.5	2232	23.7	-
Granturismo Trofeo	★★★⯪☆	11.9.24	An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.	3.6	3.1	-	33.0	-
Granturismo Folgore	★★★⯪☆	26.2.25	Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.	2.9	2.3	2358	2.3	183
MC20 Cielo	★★★★☆	16.10.24	Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.	4.0	2.8	1783	29.6	-

MAZDA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav	★★★★☆	22.4.15	The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.	10.4	11.0	1050	-	-
3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport	★★★★☆	6.11.19	Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.	9.1	9.1	1425	57.0	-
MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech	★★★⯪☆	10.3.21	Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.	9.1	8.6	1663	-	-
CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line	★★★★☆	19.2.25	Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.	7.6	7.6	1422	45.2	-
CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav	★★★★☆	28.6.17	Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.	9.4	9.2	1620	53.9	-
CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line	★★★⯪☆	10.5.23	Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.	7.6	7.2	1893	52.3	-

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*For three weeks from publication date

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav	★★★★½	2.9.15	An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.	8.4	7.9	1050	-	-

McLAREN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
720S	★★★★★	24.5.17	Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.	2.9	2.0	1419	24.2	-
750S	★★★★☆	19.6.24	McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.	2.9	2.0	1412	28.8	-
Artura	★★★★½	19.10.22	Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.	3.2	2.1	1552	32.9	17
Artura Spider	★★★★½	6.11.24	Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.	3.1	2.2	1618	27.2	17
GT	★★★½☆	27.1.21	Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.	3.3	2.3	1580	34.2	

MERCEDES-AMG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A45 S 4Matic+ Plus	★★★★½	4.3.20	AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.	4.1	3.3	1661	41.5	-
C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate	★★★☆☆	31.7.24	Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.	3.3	2.8	2217	27.1	7.1
GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé	★★★★½	13.3.19	AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.	3.3	2.7	2135	30.1	-
GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé	★★★½☆	21.6.23	Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.	2.9	2.5	2339	23.9	6
EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition	★★★★☆	8.6.22	Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.	3.6	2.8	2673	-	259
S63 E Performance Night Edition	★★★★☆	2.10.24	Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.	3.5	2.7	2666	26.1	-
GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★½☆	14.10.20	Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.	5.4	4.9	2471	29.4	-
SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★½☆	26.7.23	Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.	3.5	2.8	1939	26.2	-
GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé	★★★½☆	14.8.24	Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.	3.1	2.7	1972	30.7	-

MERCEDES-BENZ

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A200 Sport	★★★★☆	4.7.18	Luxurious and desirable but not good enough to drive to take top spot.	8.7	7.9	1375	56.7	-
A200 AMG Line Executive	★★★★☆	24.5.23	Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.	7.8	7.3	1396	59.3	-
A250e AMG Line Premium	★★★☆☆	5.8.20	Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.	6.7	5.4	1665	57.8	-
B180 Sport	★★★★☆	3.4.19	In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.	8.4	8.3	1405	51.3	-
CLA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	21.8.19	Nearer the mark to look at but still way wide of it as a driver's car.	6.8	6.1	1555	48.3	-
C300e AMG Line	★★★★½	4.5.22	Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.	5.8	5.1	2005	49.0	48
E220d AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	3.1.24	An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.	7.2	5.9	1917	65.8	-
EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★½☆	4.1.23	Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.	6.0	5.5	2386	-	262
EQS 450 Business Class SUV	★★★½☆	6.3.24	Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.	5.5	5.2	2899	-	265
S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive	★★★★½	6.4.22	Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.	5.2	4.2	2530	37.0	45
EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	17.11.21	Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.	8.4	7.6	2030	-	200
GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	16.9.20	Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.	7.4	7.1	1810	55.4	-
EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	18.5.22	A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.	7.7	6.8	2235	-	-
GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★½☆	13.9.23	Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.	6.5	6.0	1929	41.2	-
GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★½☆	12.2.20	Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.	6.5	6.0	2634	38.2	-
G350d AMG Line	★★★★☆	17.7.19	Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.	7.5	7.2	2451	31.3	-
G500 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	25.9.24	Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.	5.1	4.5	-	30.7	-
CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.	6.1	5.5	2122	37.1	49

MG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★½☆	12.6.24	Good value and with no serious vices but still lacks a final layer of polish.	6.8	6.2	1311	47.9	-
4 EV Long Range SE	★★★★☆	5.4.23	Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.	7.1	6.1	1692	-	185
5 SW EV Exclusive	★★★½☆	25.11.20	MG's second EV does cheap motoring much better than the first.	8.0	7.1	1538	-	161
ZS EV Exclusive	★★★☆☆	4.12.19	Practical, affordable MG fails to truly move the game on.	8.9	8.0	1556	-	113
ZS Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★☆☆	22.1.25	Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.	7.6	6.6	1422	41.5	-

MINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Countryman C Exclusive	★★★½☆	17.4.24	Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.	8.7	7.7	1618	46.9	-
Aceman SE Exclusive	★★★½☆	8.1.25	Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.	6.8	5.7	1756	3.1	162

MORGAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Plus Four	★★★½☆	12.8.20	Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.	5.1	4.3	1013	54.0	-
Plus Six	★★★★☆	10.4.24	The individualist's sports car made better.	4.4	3.3	1188	37.2	-
Super 3	★★★★½	9.11.22	Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.	6.9	5.9	644	43.5	-

NISSAN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna	★★★½☆	29.1.20	Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.	11.9	11.8	1256	46.0	-
Qashqai 1.3 DIG-T 158 Tekna	★★★★☆	28.7.21	Ticks the important family car boxes but its powertrain frustrates.	10.0	9.3	1412	44.9	-
Ariya 87kWh Evolve	★★★½☆	26.10.22	Surprisingly traditional and luxurious but not wholly successful.	8.2	6.4	2109	-	-
X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna	★★★★☆	22.2.23	Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.	6.6	6.0	1947	33.8	-

OMODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
5 1.6 TGDI Comfort	★★½☆☆	20.11.24	Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.	7.4	6.3	1474	38.2	-

PEUGEOT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
e-208 Allure Premium	★★★★☆	6.5.20	Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV	-	-	1455	38.2	-
308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT	★★★★☆	25.5.22	A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.	9.5	9.2	1358	55.3	-
408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8	★★★★☆	11.10.23	Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.	8.2	7.3	1746	42.1	40
508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto	★★★★☆	24.10.18	Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.	8.8	8.5	1671	52.0	-
508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8	★★★★☆	8.7.20	This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.	-	-	1720	-	-

TOP 3

BEST ELECTRIC CARS

1 Cupra Born

2 Hyundai Ioniq 5 N

3 Volkswagen ID 7

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
508 SW Hybrid4 PSE ★★★★☆	5.5.21	Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.	5.7	4.7	1892	44.0	-
e-2008 GT Line ★★★⯪☆	30.9.20	Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.	9.5	8.9	1638	-	-
3008 1.6 BlueHDi 120 GT Line ★★★⯪☆	18.1.17	In challenging company, the 3008 promises more than it delivers.	12.0	12.1	1300	53.2	-
e-3008 73kWh Allure ★★★⯪☆	4.8.24	Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.	8.5	7.1	2132	-	219
5008 Hybrid 136 GT ★★★☆☆	12.2.25	Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.	9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	-

POLESTAR

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 BST Edition 270 ★★★⯪☆	12.4.23	A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.	4.5	3.4	2161	-	188
3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition ★★★★☆	12.2.25	Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.	4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235

PORSCHE

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
718 Boxster ★★★★⯪	8.6.16	Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.	5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-
718 Cayman S ★★★★⯪	10.8.16	Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.	4.8	3.9	1430	-	-
718 Spyder ★★★★⯪	1.4.20	Spyder's flat six rectifies most, if not quite all, of the 718's shortcomings.	4.3	3.5	1350	30.1	-
718 Cayman GT4 RS ★★★★★	14.9.22	A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.	3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-
911 GT3 PDK ★★★★⯪	11.8.21	Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.	3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-
911 Turbo S ★★★★⯪	10.8.22	Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.	2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-
911 Carrera T ★★★★☆	30.8.23	Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.	4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-
911 GT3 RS ★★★★⯪	22.11.23	Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.	3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-
911 Dakar ★★★★☆	10.1.24	Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.	3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-
911 S/T ★★★★★	3.7.24	Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.	3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-
911 Carrera GTS ★★★★⯪	5.3.25	Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.	2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-
Macan Turbo ★★★★⯪	4.6.14	Luxury SUV meets sports car in a compact, well-priced package.	4.7	4.3	2050	30.9	-
Macan Turbo Electric ★★★⯪☆	19.2.25	Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.	3.0	2.5	–	2.1	219
Cayenne S ★★★★⯪	21.2.24	Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.	5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-
Cayenne Turbo ★★★★☆	5.9.18	As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.	3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-
Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid ★★★⯪☆	27.5.20	Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.	-	-	2490	-	-
Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé ★★★★☆	20.7.22	Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one.	3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-
Panamera 4 E-Hybrid ★★★★☆	22.1.25	Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.	3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29
Taycan Turbo S ★★★★⯪	30.10.24	Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.	2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233

RENAULT

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Clio TCe 100 Iconic ★★★★⯪	27.11.19	Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.	11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-
5 ★★★★⯪	12.3.25	Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.	7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166
Mégane E-Tech Techno ★★★⯪☆	23.11.22	Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.	6.9	5.4	1688	-	198
Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC ★★★⯪☆	18.3.20	Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.	9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-
Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition ★★★⯪☆	13.10.21	Showy styling clothes an eminently sensible but unspectacular car.	11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-
Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range ★★★★☆	26.6.24	The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.	8.1	6.3	1916	-	313
Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine ★★★⯪☆	19.7.23	Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.	8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-

ROLLS-ROYCE

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghost ★★★★⯪	13.1.21	Most technologically advanced Rolls-Royce is an exceptional limo.	4.7	3.8	2490	28.5	-
Phantom ★★★★★	4.4.18	The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.	5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-
Spectre ★★★★⯪	20.12.23	Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.	4.1	3.1	2935	-	245
Cullinan Black Badge ★★★★☆	19.2.20	Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.	4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-

SEAT

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology ★★★★⯪	19.7.17	Grown-up supermini shows its rivals how it's done – in most respects.	10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-
Leon eHybrid FR ★★★⯪☆	2.12.20	Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.	7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26
Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology ★★★★☆	15.11.17	Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.	10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-
Ateca 1.6 TDI Ecomotive SE ★★★★⯪	19.10.16	Former class leader for all the right reasons – desirability included.	10.5	10.3	1408	-	-
Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG ★★★☆☆	25.10.23	Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.	8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-

SKODA

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort ★★★★⯪	9.2.22	Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.	9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-
Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG ★★★⯪☆	31.7.19	Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.	7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-
Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG ★★★★☆	2.9.20	Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.	8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-
Octavia Estate vRS ★★★★☆	29.1.25	A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.	5.9	4.8	–	37.6	-
Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate ★★★★★	17.7.24	The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.	8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-
Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout ★★★⯪☆	30.1.19	Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.	8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-
Enyaq iV 80 Lounge ★★★★☆	18.8.21	Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.	8.3	7.8	2098	-	262

SMART

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
#1 Premium ★★★⯪☆	8.11.23	Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.	5.6	4.6	1861	-	229
#3 Premium ★★★⯪☆	15.5.24	Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.	5.7	4.9	1832	-	205

SUBARU

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring ★★★⯪☆	28.2.24	Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.	10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-
Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring ★★★⯪☆	27.9.23	A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked.	9.3	8.7	1690	42.8	-
Solterra AWD Touring ★★★☆☆	15.3.23	A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough.	6.7	6.2	2051	-	169

SUZUKI

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Vitara 1.6 SZ5 ★★★⯪☆	29.4.15	The Vitara is solidly built in Suzuki's image – and that's fine with us.	9.5	9.5	1124	-	-
SX4 S-Cross 1.6 DDiS SZ4 ★★★⯪☆	30.10.13	Quietly capable in most respects and remarkable for its parsimony.	10.0	10.1	1305	67.5	-

TOP 3

BEST SUPERMINIS

1 Renault Clio

2 Seat Ibiza

3 Skoda Fabia

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT	★★★★½	7.4.21	Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around.	6.4	5.8	1966	44.4	48
TESLA								
Model 3 Standard Range Plus	★★★★☆	4.9.19	Wrinkles aside, it offers great electric performance and usability at this price.	5.8	4.7	1633	-	156
Model 3 Long Range	★★★★☆	14.2.24	Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.	4.4	3.4	1846	-	277
Model Y Long Range AWD	★★★★☆	23.3.22	A far better electric car than a premium SUV.	4.7	3.6	1978	-	234
Model S P90D	★★★★½	20.4.16	Great EV, intriguing driver's car. Not quite the perfect luxury GT.	3.5	3.0	2220	-	214
Model S Plaid	★★★½☆	2.8.23	Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.	2.4	1.7	2220	-	301
Model X 90D	★★★★☆	15.2.17	High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.	5.2	4.2	2508	-	147
TOYOTA								
Aygo X Limited Edition	★★★½☆	11.5.22	A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.	15.6	16.5	974	58.7	-
Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design	★★★★☆	23.9.20	Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.	9.2	8.8	1140	65.0	-
GR Yaris Circuit Pack	★★★★★	3.3.21	Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.	5.2	5.0	1283	39.2	-
Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports	★★★★☆	5.6.19	A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.	8.5	7.7	1537	52.6	-
bZ4X AWD Vision	★★★½☆	18.1.23	A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.	6.4	5.9	2023	-	208
Mirai Design Premium	★★★★☆	16.6.21	Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.	8.7	8.3	1937	-	-
GR Supra Pro	★★★★☆	14.8.19	Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.	4.4	3.6	1495	39.0	-
Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport	★★★½☆	1.3.23	Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.	10.0	9.5	2241	32.5	-
VAUXHALL								
Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto	★★★½☆	22.1.20	Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.	11.2	11.5	1171	51.8	-
Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line	★★★½☆	5.10.22	Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.	9.9	9.2	1304	55.3	-
Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite	★★★☆☆	7.6.17	Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.	9.8	10.3	1278	54.2	-
Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto	★★★½☆	12.5.21	The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.	9.3	9.1	1238	48.6	-
Grandland X Hybrid4 Ultimate Nav	★★★☆☆	22.4.20	Inspires big expectations and delivers few, but it's an interesting fleet option.	-	-	1800	-	-
Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy	★★★½☆	27.12.18	Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.	14.7	16.2	1552	60.1	-
VOLKSWAGEN								
Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE	★★★★½	31.1.18	Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.	10.7	11.2	1145	57.1	-
Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+	★★★★☆	1.8.18	A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.	6.7	5.9	1342	46.8	-
Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG	★★★★½	22.7.20	Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.	8.3	7.8	1330	60.0	-
Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style	★★★★½	23.10.24	New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.	7.2	6.1	1619	46.5	-
Golf GTI	★★★½☆	25.9.24	'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.	5.3	4.4	–	47.2	-
Golf R	★★★★☆	14.4.21	Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price.	4.4	3.7	1520	43.9	-
ID 3 Pro Performance Life	★★★★☆	31.3.21	Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.	7.0	6.5	1757	-	145
Arteon 2.0 BiTDI 240PS 4Motion R-Line	★★★½☆	27.9.17	Considered approach produces an executive flagship short on sparkle.	6.5	6.2	1866	55.6	-
Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake	★★★½☆	9.6.21	Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.	7.1	6.0	1783	52.5	-
ID 7 Pro Match	★★★★½	13.3.24	Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.	6.1	5.1	2162	-	239
T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG	★★★★½	24.1.18	Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.	6.7	6.5	1534	37.5	-
T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG	★★½☆☆	10.6.20	It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.	-	-	1540	-	-
Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line	★★★½☆	22.5.24	Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.	9.4	9.2	1606	44.9	-
ID 4 GTX Max	★★★½☆	27.10.21	GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.	6.2	5.6	2220	-	200
Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech	★★★½☆	8.8.18	An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.	7.2	6.6	2292	41.6	-
Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance	★★★½☆	5.6.24	It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.	6.2	5.7	2446	34.1	26
Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG	★★★★☆	3.2.16	A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one.	9.9	9.7	1666	-	-
Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style	★★★★☆	8.3.23	Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.	8.4	7.1	2243	37.9	14
ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro	★★★★☆	8.2.23	It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.	9.5	9.1	2498	-	185
Grand California 600	★★★½☆	2.1.20	Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.	15.8	16.7	3095	28.5	-
Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB	★★★☆☆	30.3.22	Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.	9.1	9.0	2108	39.1	-
Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sister car.	7.2	6.4	1836	44.5	73
VOLVO								
EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus	★★★☆☆	1.5.24	Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism.	5.7	5.1	1779	-	179
C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate	★★★½☆	13.4.22	A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.	4.4	3.6	2172	-	194
XC40 D4 AWD First Edition	★★★★½	7.2.18	Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger brothers, if not better.	8.5	8.5	1735	43.8	-
XC60 D4 AWD R-Design	★★★½☆	5.7.17	The right product at the right time but lacking the right dynamic finish.	8.9	8.9	1836	48.9	-
XC90 D5 AWD Momentum	★★★★☆	17.6.15	A very impressive all-rounder with its own distinctive appeal.	8.3	8.3	2076	-	-
V60 D4 Momentum Pro Auto	★★★★☆	27.6.18	Fine-looking, capable and practical estate with only a few demerits.	8.9	8.3	1669	43.1	-
V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★½	21.9.22	Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.	4.9	4.3	2036	38.0	51
V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★½	11.11.20	Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.	5.6	4.9	2109	41.9	-
XPENG								
G6 RWD Standard Range	★★★½☆	26.2.25	Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.	6.8	6.2	2067	3.3	208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

AUTOCAR IMAGE

Audi RS Q6 E-tron October
Porsche Macan EV twin should be a 600bhp Quattro nutter.

Dacia Jogger June
Cheapest seven-seater gets fresh styling, punchier hybrid.

DS N°4 May
Refreshed high-riding hatch gains EV powertrain option.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST

Why I love...
F1'S POP CULTURE APPEAL

Leclerc looks like a movie star and now he gets treated like one too

BY MURRAY SCULLION

I recently attended the leaving drinks for an emigrating friend. We met through another friend and have few others in common, so I knew I would have to deploy my best small talk. Gulp. I was pleasantly surprised, then, when I found the main topic of conversation wasn't a subject I knew nothing about – politics, religion, finance – but Formula 1, a sport we were soon analysing as casually and knowledgeably as the pundits on neighbouring tables were discussing football.

I think we have the Americans to thank for the sport's significantly broadened appeal and enhanced accessibility. Later, my friend introduced me to a group of women in their twenties, and I was pleased to discover they were also huge F1 fans. Perhaps I shouldn't be surprised, but could you imagine reading that sentence even just a decade ago?

I couldn't imagine writing it were it not for the Stateside influence in the sport. Our friends from across the pond have made the sport I love, frankly, more palatable for 'normies'. Every aspect, from the design to the engineering to the driver interviews, seems so much more visceral than it ever was; somehow much clearer and within grasp. And it all started with a fairly innocuous rule change.

In January 2017, Liberty Media bought the Formula 1 Group for close to £3.5 billion. This seemed momentous: no more Bernie. Changes were initially small – but they had a snowball effect. The first was the most significant, in my opinion: the relaxation of social media rules. Contractual restrictions around posting video content in and around the paddock area were lifted and F1 teams and drivers began to gain huge digital followings. Then Netflix got involved and that snowball became absolutely enormous.

These are the kind of 'influencers' who appeal to us

> **"The Americans have made the sport more palatable for normies"**

I thought the first series of Drive to Survive was pretty good, and while I also feel that it has since become slightly naff and contrived, that doesn't matter: the effect has taken. The F1 stars of today are just that: stars. Lewis Hamilton is one of the most recognisable faces on Earth today, everyone either loves or hates Max Verstappen and it's pretty rare for Charles Leclerc to notch up less than a million likes on an Instagram post.

And none of it has come at a cost to the racing quality. Last season was the most engaging I've ever watched: Lando Norris's breakthrough as a title contender (and subsequently bottling it), McLaren winning the constructors' title, Verstappen taking the driver's title in what was definitely not the quickest or easiest car to drive, Sergio Pérez performing very poorly in that same car and Hamilton announcing that he was switching to Ferrari! Bloody hell.

I can't attribute any of that to the Americans in any tangible, measurable way. But it's the pop culture vibe their involvement has fostered that I love. F1 is cool again. It's no longer reserved exclusively for beardy men drinking pints of ale. Normal people like it too now, and that makes it much easier to find someone who will argue with you about DRS and stewards' decisions.

What we did this week

FUEL ME ONCE...

I test drove this 2014 BMW 550i Touring at the weekend. Over an admittedly short route, it did 35mpg, despite me using all 444bhp from its 4.4-litre petrol V8 at points. That's 4mpg more than Omoda claims for its new 1.6-litre four-cylinder crossover. You can't convince me that frugality has to come at the cost of performance, then – although I will admit that BMW's N63 engine is notoriously fragile.

ALEX WOLSTENHOLME

TRIAL BY MIRE

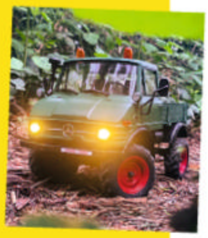
I did my first classic trial of 2025 the other day: the infamous Cotswold Clouds, which features the tricky Nailsworth Ladder section, a long and steep climb near Stroud that has been part of the trial for more than 100 years. Here's a fantastic image from the Autocar Archive of a Bentley climbing the hill in 1936. Helmsman Mr Elgood successfully climbed the section that day. Mr Phillips, 89 years later, did not.

SAM PHILLIPS

REMOTE WORKING

Ever since shooting a feature on Mercedes-Benz's Unimogs in 2023, I've been obsessed with the unstoppable behemoths. I lack the space, funds and all-important HGV licence to buy one of my own, but I've found the next best thing: a 1:24-scale radio-controlled version. Powered by a tiny electric motor, it has portal axles just like the real thing. My garden won't know what's hit it.

JACK HARRISON



4 PINTS
THE NIGHT
BEFORE

One in five drink drive prosecutions happen the morning after[A], many unaware they still have alcohol left in their system from the night before. AlcoSense quickly and accurately tells you your blood alcohol level, so you don't become one of them.

The Telegraph

"a fresh level of accuracy in consumer breath testing"[B]

lite
ELITE
excel
pro
0.8
0.28 mg/L
0.27 mg/L
0.31 mg/L
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alcosense elite 3
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Here for the
automotive
industry
ben
Support for life

Life going off track?

We've got your back.

We are **automotive.**

We are **your charity.**

We are **here for you.**

Supporting you through life's twists and turns.
Contact our free & confidential helpline.

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